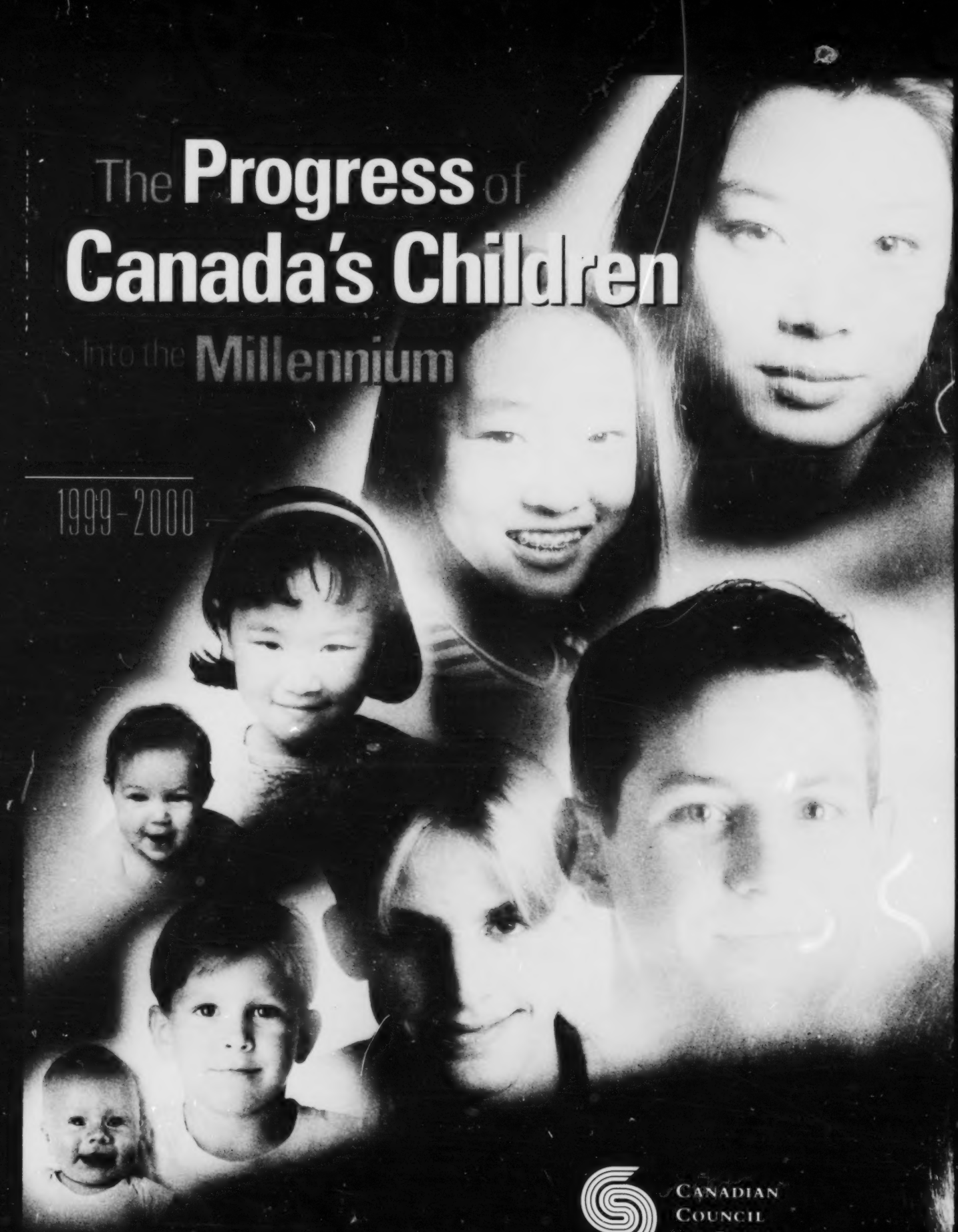
The Progress of Canada's Children

Into the Millennium

1999-2000



Canadian Council on Social Development

Acknowledgements

The Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) wishes to acknowledge the important contributions made to *The Progress of Canada's Children* by Human Resources Development Canada and Statistics Canada through their pioneering work on the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth. This rich information resource provides the primary source of data for *The Progress of Canada's Children*.

The CCSD also wishes to thank the Laidlaw Foundation for their invaluable support for the development of this project over the last five years, and to the Department of Justice Canada for their support of *Progress* over the years. Thanks also to Health Canada and the National Crime Prevention Centre for their generous contributions towards the 1999/2000 edition of *The Progress of Canada's Children*.

Special thanks to Human Resources Development Canada for its ongoing support of the CCSD's research work, and to the staff of the CCSD, all of whom make a contribution to this project.

Special thanks also to the participants at the Millennium Roundtable which was convened for *Progress* this year. Their contributions were greatly appreciated and their names are listed on the inside back cover.

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National Library of Canada cataloguing

The progress of Canada's children

1996–

Also issued in French under title :
Le progrès des enfants au Canada.

ISSN 1208-9109

ISBN 0-88810-489-8 (1999/2000 issue)

1. Children–Canada–Social conditions.
2. Children–Canada–Economic conditions.
3. Family–Canada–Social conditions.
4. Family–Canada–Economic conditions.
5. Social indicators–Canada.
6. Health status indicators–Canada.
I. Canadian Council on Social Development

HQ792.C3P8 305.23'0971'05 C97-300208-5

Design and layout: Accurate

Printed on Canadian-made recycled paper.

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What will Canada provide for our children?

This article reflects the thoughts of a panel of experts on child and youth well-being who assembled in 1999 for roundtable discussions, as part of the preparations for this issue of* The Progress of Canada's Children. *It describes the concerns and visions for children and youth that they shared over the two days of discussions.

As the dawn of the 21st century, Canada stands at a crossroads. The 1990s were marked by reductions in education, health care and social services – all things that are crucial to the healthy development of children and families. Will the new millennium become a period of reinvestment in the well-being of our children and youth? Or will it be a period when inequalities deepen, services continue to fragment, and the families of children and youth are left to their own devices to create tomorrow's citizens?

Here we describe some of the barriers that stand in the way of optimal child well-being, and we set out some directions to remove those barriers.

Why aren't all of Canada's children and youth attaining their optimum potential?

Governments take families for granted. Families are not simply factories for future workers, nor are children simply consumer goods. As the building blocks of our society, families provide social benefits that extend beyond their own homes and they enrich all our lives in ways more complex than those that can simply be deducted from an income tax form. But in our rapidly changing society, families need constant care and support in order to succeed. Governments at all levels could be doing much more to support healthy family functioning.

Businesses pay little attention to families. Businesses exist to make profits and enhance the wealth of their shareholders. This preoccupation with increasing shareholders' values has surged to new heights in recent years, causing businesses to increase their pressure on governments to remove regulations so that they can better compete in the global economy. But what about family values? The employees in businesses are also parents, dedicated to their children's well-being. Flexible work arrangements or family leave provisions are lacking in most workplaces, leaving many parents to sacrifice their own health in order to care for their children. Forcing parents to choose between work and family is not the solution.

Economic growth is promoted as a way to improve our quality of life. Economics dominates our daily news, and governments at all levels are racing to find ways to increase growth and augment Canada's productivity – a concept that remains ill-defined. Private corporations are increasing their profits by shedding workers and making those who remain work longer hours. But what does this pursuit of international competitiveness mean for our quality of life? Is it worthwhile to pursue it at such a fast pace? Who are the real winners?

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Increased materialism leads to weakened spiritualism. One unfortunate consequence of this obsession with economic growth is the equation of the material with the spiritual. This value system claims that the more we spend, the happier we will be. Real spiritual growth is viewed as unproductive and inefficient.

Governments blame globalization. The increased emphasis on economic growth has led to a tendency to blame globalization for the changes to Canada's economic and social policies. Governments have frequently claimed that they cannot act against the impersonal and overwhelming world economic trends. While it is true that more fluid borders and more rapidly moving currency do require governments to adapt, they do not mean that Canada must give up its sovereignty as a nation.

The educational system has weakened. The push for heightened productivity has been transmitted from the halls of government all the way down to elementary schools. Across Canada, elementary and secondary school curricula are being revised to impart skills that will be more useful to students in the workplace, rather than in the home or community. These policies give short shrift to creativity and imagination – qualities that are equally essential in an information economy.

Public policies cling to the past. Canadian public policies – from taxation to social services – are woefully outdated. The majority of parents must combine paid and unpaid work in order to make ends meet while they raise their children. But Canadian public policies are still based on norms from the 1950s, when mothers stayed at home to care for their children and a father's salary could sustain the family. The sooner policy-makers acknowledge these changes, the better-served our children and families will be.

Too few women are making decisions. Although most women are now in the paid workforce, they are still underrepresented in the country's corporate board rooms and in the political halls of power. To a large extent, the push over the last few decades for a more compassionate and more caring society has come from women. Their growing numbers in top decision-making positions will produce better results for children and families.

Directions for change

Considering the many factors stacked against them, it is a wonder that children and families are doing as well as they are. But if Canada adopted the following objectives, we could improve outcomes for our children and youth, particularly for those who are most at risk of falling behind.

Make family well-being the priority of public policy. Families are the basis of Canadian society. It is time that we recognized the value of child-raising in public policies. This can be done by measuring the effects of policies on families, including policies related to the economy, social relations, and the environment. With the federal government in a budgetary surplus and most provinces close to that point, it is time to reinvest in programs and services that will strengthen children and families.

Create a safe world for children. The quality of the air that our children breath has deteriorated in Canada's large urban areas. Traffic congestion increases with little attention paid to the short- and long-term consequences on our health. As well, fear – either real or imagined – can wreak irreparable harm on a child. At home, an abusive parent can instill a fear of intimacy and a mistrust of adults that can last a lifetime. At school, playground bullies – children often struggling with their own emotional difficulties – can make life a waking nightmare for other children. Far too often, these children – victims and bullies alike – wind up in the hands of child welfare or foster care. Changes in Canadians' attitudes towards the environment and adequate funding for the child welfare system are needed if our children are to become safer from harm.

About this year's report

In 1991, Canada became a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In The Progress of Canada's Children, we use objective indicators to measure just how equitably Canada uses its resources to guarantee the rights of our children.

Canadian children and youth have voiced their own priorities for human rights. Nearly 200,000 cast their votes in 1999 for the rights they felt were the most important to them – as individuals and as members of their families and their communities. At the top of the list were the rights to family, food, shelter, and health.

This year's edition of Progress includes a retrospective look over the last 10 years to see how successful we have been as a country in ensuring that these and other important rights enshrined in the Convention are provided to our young people. And, based on our analysis of this situation and the advice of experts, we are looking forward, to provide a vision of what Canada would look like in the year 2020 if it were child-, youth- and family-friendly.

Fully engage youth. To the uncritical eye, the increased visibility of youth in today's media reflects the priority they are given. But "youth culture" is largely a marketing ploy aimed at selling designer fashions and compact discs. It does not help youth to increase their self-esteem, nor does it address the tensions that arise between generations. We need to create an environment that helps youth make the transition to adulthood and from school to work more smoothly.

Abolish "just-in-time" parenting. The combination of rapidly changing work patterns and inadequate child care has created a lifestyle that few families can – or should – sustain. Parents working full-time to keep their families out of poverty are feeling increasingly guilty about leaving their children in care or alone. We must heed the calls for better child care and more flexible work hours.

Reduce income disparities. The negative effects of low family income on child development are no longer in dispute. From learning, to health, to scholastic ability, children in families earning less than $30,000 fare consistently worse than children in middle- and higher-income families. With the National Child Benefit, the federal government has taken a step towards alleviating the hardship of low-income families. But more investments are needed.

Shift more resources to local control. Who knows what is best for a community? Who should evaluate the community's needs? Many of the problems facing Canadian children are most prevalent in cities – such as aging or dangerous playgrounds, decreased access to recreation and cultural activities, and a shortage of adequate housing. Yet cities are the least able to deal with these problems. The battle against deficits – waged chiefly in Ottawa backrooms – starved cities of crucial funding that has yet to be restored. A federally supported community development fund should be established to enable cities to help their children, for it is the people closest to the communities who know how best to meet their children's needs.

Canada has done much that is right to promote the well-being of children and youth, such as building systems of universal health care and education. But Canada doesn't yet "have it right" in terms of all of its children. Too many kids are going to bed hungry, falling behind at school, and suffering from stress brought on by our fast-paced society. There are ways to improve life for our children and youth. Pursuing these improvements should be our millennium challenge. ✹

Progress Report at a Glance

Portrait of Children and Youth

Most children live in two-parent families. In 1996, 84% of the 5.5 million children up to age 13 lived with two parents. However, the proportion of lone-parent families has doubled over the past 35 years, from 11% to 22%.

More than half of all Aboriginal people in Canada are children and youth. Canada's 424,000 Aboriginal young people make up 5% of all children under age 15 in the country and 4% of youth aged 15 to 24.

More young Canadians live in families that speak a language other than English or French. Between 1991 and 1996, the proportion of children aged 14 and under in families speaking a language other than English or French rose from 6.5% to 7.5%. The most commonly used non-official language was Chinese.

WHAT CONTRIBUTES TO CHILD AND YOUTH WELL-BEING?

Family Life

Family life is positive for most children. In 1996, only 7% of children up to age 13 were living in families considered to be "dysfunctional," a slight improvement since 1994. In addition, the proportion of parents who don't use physical punishment is increasing.

More families are having trouble balancing their work and family responsibilities. Between 1991 and 1998, the proportion of workers with dependants who reported excess tension due to work/family conflicts increased from 38% to 44%.

More youth are delaying leaving home. Between 1981 and 1996, the proportion of youth aged 20 to 24 still living at home increased from 43% to 57%.

Economic Security

Only one-third of Canadians say their financial situation has improved over the past two or three years. Just under half of Canadians with incomes above $60,000 say their situation is improving, but less than one-fifth of those with incomes under $30,000 reported an improvement.

Income disparities among families continue to grow. In 1996, the poorest Canadian families brought home 13% of all earnings, down from 17% in 1989. A child's chances of living in poverty in the 1990s increased if they lived with young parents, a lone parent, or if their parent was a member of a visible minority group.

Child poverty rates remain high. The number of poor children in Canada dropped by 7% between 1996 and 1997, but there were still 50% more poor children than in 1989.

Physical Safety

Children and youth are safer from crime. Since 1991, the national crime rate has fallen by almost 22%. In 1998, the rate of violent crime fell for the sixth consecutive year.

Fewer youth are killed in car crashes. Graduated licensing systems adopted in six provinces are helping to reduce car crashes, with Ontario, Nova Scotia and Quebec reporting dramatic declines in their fatal collision rates.

Dangerous chemicals in food, air and water still pose poorly measured risks to Canadian children. National legislation governing the use of pesticides is 30 years old.

Children are being exposed to toxins from mould in schools. Mould is most commonly found in portable classrooms with poor ventilation and drainage.

The majority of young teens feel safe at school most of the time. Just over half of children aged 10 to 13 feel safe at school all the time, and about one-third feel safe most of the time. One-quarter say that other kids say mean things to them and 9% report being bullied.

Community Resources

Child care spaces in most provinces have decreased or remained static over the last five years. Meanwhile, 81% of Canadians support more government action on child care.

Public spending on education rose by about 3% between 1992 and 1996, but it fell as a proportion of gross national product.

University fees increased in all provinces except Quebec and BC between 1998 and 1999. Students in Nova Scotia and Ontario pay the highest tuition fees, averaging about $4,000 per year.

More children are coming into the care of child welfare agencies. Experts attribute this to heightened public awareness over the 1990s about the seriousness of child abuse and neglect, to stronger legislation, and worsening conditions among the poor.

Homelessness among children is rising. In Toronto alone, the number of families admitted to hostels increased by 76% between 1988 and 1996, with more than 5,000 children homeless in 1996.

Children are part of the growing population of food bank users. More than 40% of all food bank recipients are under age 18. In March 1999, on average, one of every 38 Canadians went to a food bank.

Civic Vitality

The number of Canadians giving money to charities increased slightly between 1997 and 1998, while the median Canadian donation remained constant at $170. Residents of Prince Edward Island gave the most, Quebecers the least.

The proportion of Canadians voting in federal elections declined in every province in the 1990s.

HOW ARE CHILDREN AND YOUTH FARING?

Health

The infant mortality rate continues to fall. Canada ranks ahead of the US and New Zealand, but behind Japan and Scandinavian countries. However, infant mortality rates for Aboriginal children in Canada are higher than for other children. The Northwest Territories reported the highest rate, at 11 deaths per 1,000 live births.

Breastfeeding rates are rising. In 1996, more than 75% of children under age 2 had been breastfed, up from 69% in 1994. Breastfeeding rates increased in all provinces, with Alberta showing the highest rate – 90%.

Reported asthma rates among children and youth are increasing. About 14% of teens in 1996 were reported to be asthma sufferers, as were 8% of children under the age of 4.

Respiratory illness is the leading cause of hospital admissions for children under age 10 in Canada. It accounted for over 40% of admissions for children aged 1 to 4 and one-third of admissions among those aged 5 to 9.

More teens are smoking. In 1996/97, almost one-third of youth aged 15 to 19 smoked. Since 1990, smoking among women aged 15 to 19 has increased from 21 to 31%; among men, it has risen from 22 to 27%.

The risk of sexually transmitted diseases among teens is worrisome. More than one-quarter of reported HIV cases in Canada are among youth aged 20 to 29. About half of sexually active women aged 15 to 19 and one-third of young men reported having unprotected sex in 1994.

Social Engagement

Canadian youth value kindness and honesty. A national poll found that more than 90% of youth consider it important to help those who are worse off than themselves. More than 75% of young Canadians feel it is important to have a lifelong partner, and more than 60% think it is important to have children.

More young women report having close friends. The proportion of children in Grades 6 and 8 who reported having fewer than two close friends dropped between 1990 and 1998, especially among Grade 8 girls. But in 1998, fewer boys than in 1990 reported having friends in whom they could confide.

More than 300,000 children under age 12 witnessed some violence in their homes in 1996, down 8% from 1994. Children who witness violence are more likely to experience feelings of anxiety and fear, and to engage in antisocial behaviours such as fighting and bullying.

Youth crime rates are declining. Between 1997 and 1998, the rate of criminal charges against youth dropped by 4%. Youth property crimes have been declining since 1991, although violent crimes rose in the early 1990s and began to drop only slightly after 1995.

Learning

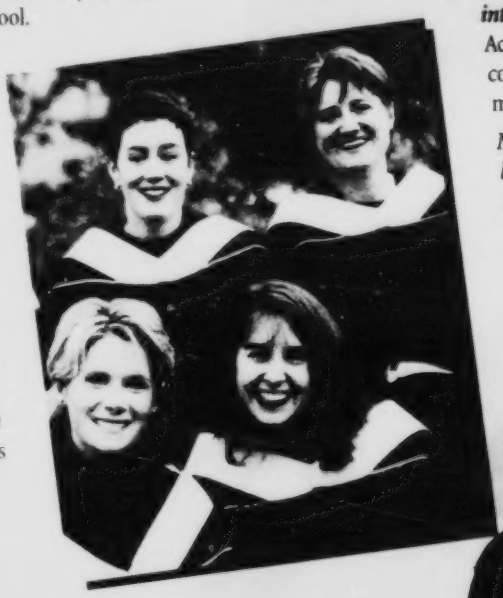
Parents of more than half of all children aged 8 to 13 place high value on their child's school grades.

Parents of more than 80% of children aged 6 to 13 help their child with homework at least once a week. The proportion drops as children get older.

Parents with low incomes read to their young children and help their older children with their homework as often as parents in other income groups. However, they are less likely to participate at their child's school.

Young Canadians aged 13 and 16 are reading and writing at levels generally expected by experts. However, in 1998, fewer 13-year-olds showed abilities at the very highest achievement levels than in 1994. Young women continued to score better than young men on tests of reading and writing abilities in 1998.

Between 1994 and 1996, the proportion of 4- and 5-year-olds who play computer and video games at least a few times a week grew. Canadian boys are more likely than girls to play computer and video games.



Policy Initiatives for Children and Youth

Quebec has been a leader in developing family policies, introducing significant changes in tax and income benefits, and services for families with children. They include $5 per day child care for preschoolers and increased housing assistance for low- and moderate-income families.

Canada's new Youth Criminal Justice Act was introduced. It will replace the Young Offenders Act and it encourages alternatives to the court system for youth who have committed minor crimes.

New First Nations child care facilities have been established in Saskatchewan. Federal funding helped develop 39 new First Nations child care facilities between 1996 and 1999.

The federal government has stated its intention to improve family benefits, starting in 2000. Commitments include increasing parental benefits under the EI program and increasing the Child Tax Benefit.

Labour Force Profile of Youth

In 1998, the youth unemployment rate was just over 15%. While this was down from over 17% in the early 1990s, the unemployment rate for adults in 1998 was less than 7%.

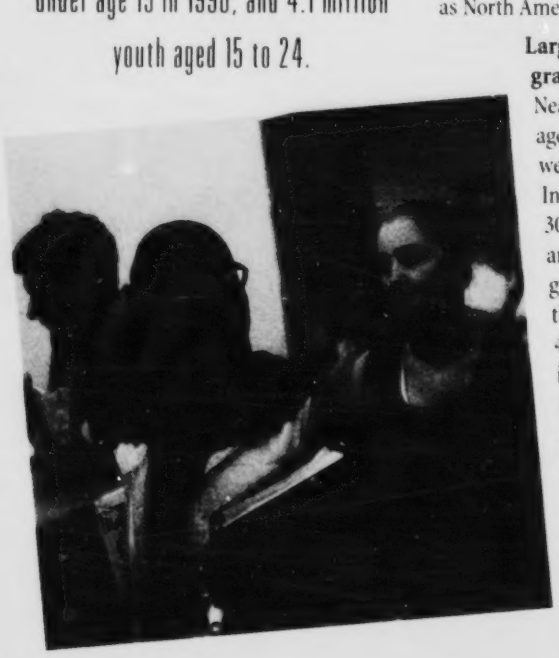
The number of self-employed Canadian youth is growing. In 1996, nearly 80,000 Canadians aged 15 to 24 were self-employed, an increase of 14,000 from 1991. Nearly 15,000 young Canadians had their own businesses before age 25.

More than 80% of post-secondary graduates who completed their studies in 1995 had found jobs by 1997. However, only 41% of those working full-time had jobs directly related to their field of study.

PORTRAIT OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Canada's children and youth are an increasingly diverse group and the structure of their families is changing. Tracking these changes is important to the development of policies and programs that respond to their ne

While the number of children and youth in Canada has been growing since 1981, they now form a smaller proportion of the population – down from 42% at the beginning of the 1980s, to 33% by 1998. There were about 6 million children under age 15 in 1998, and 4.1 million youth aged 15 to 24.



Canadian Children and Youth are Diverse

Aboriginal children and youth

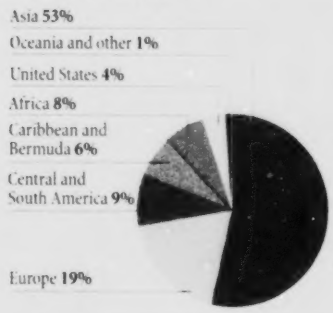
Unlike the overall pattern in Canada, the proportion of Aboriginal children and youth has been growing – in 1996, they represented 53% of all Aboriginal people. Canada's 424,000 Aboriginal young people constitute 5% of all children under age 15 and 4% of youth aged 15 to 24. Aboriginal children and youth include those identified as North American Indian, Métis or Inuit.

Large cities home to immigrant children and youth

Nearly 5% of children under age 15 and about 11% of youth were born outside of Canada. In 1996, there were nearly 300,000 immigrant children and more than 430,000 immigrant youth. Two-thirds of the immigrant children and 40% of the youth had been in Canada for less than five years.

Two-thirds of immigrant children and youth live in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, and nearly 90% live in Ontario, BC and Quebec.

WHERE DO CANADA'S IMMIGRANT YOUTH COME FROM?



Note: Canadians up to age 24 whose families immigrated to Canada between 1991 and 1996, by place of birth
N = 366,480
Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using 1996 Census data, custom tabulations

Language

Of the 5.9 million children up to age 14 in Canada in 1996, 7.5% lived in families speaking a language other than English or French – up from 6.5% in 1991. Of the 3.9 million youth aged 15 to 24 in 1996, 8.1% lived in families in which neither official language was used at home – up from 6.7% in 1991. The most commonly used language was Chinese, followed by Aboriginal languages, Spanish and Punjabi. In British Columbia, the proportion of the population speaking neither English nor French at home almost doubled between 1971 and 1996. In Ontario, it increased by 40%.

Children in Families

Most children live in two-parent families

Most young children live in two-parent families with their biological parents. According to the NLSCY, of the 5.5 million Canadian children up to age 13 in 1996:

- 84% lived with two parents
- 16% lived with one parent
- 78% lived with both biological parents
- 9% lived with at least one step-parent.

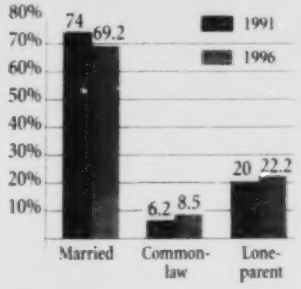
For children up to age 11, the proportions were virtually unchanged from 1994 to 1996.

The proportion of lone-parent families has doubled over the past 35 years. In 1961, 11% of families with children were headed by one parent; by 1991, that figure was 20% and by 1996 it had increased to 22%. The majority of lone-parent families (83%) were headed by a woman, a figure unchanged since 1991.

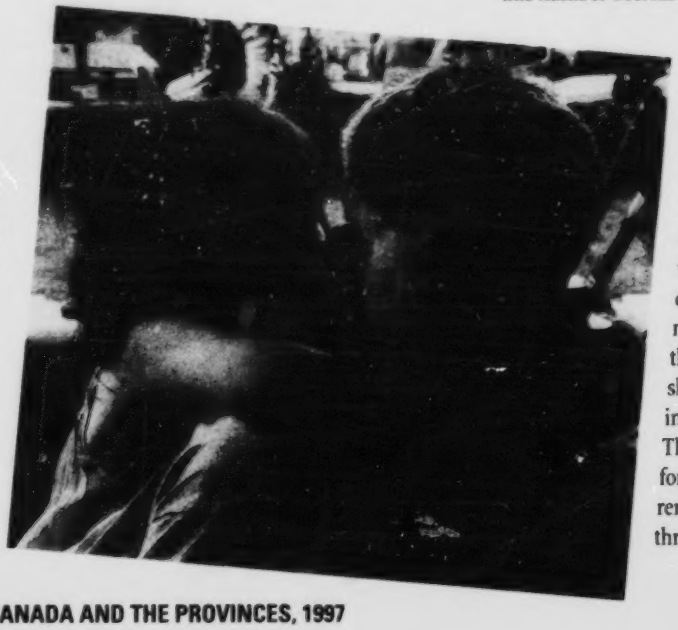
Most parents have some post-secondary education

In 1996, more than two-thirds of parents with children under age 14 had some post-secondary education, and 40% of all parents interviewed for the NLSCY (primarily mothers) and 44% of their spouses had a degree or diploma.

THE STRUCTURE OF CANADIAN FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN



Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using Census data. Nation Series, 1996.



Having fewer babies

Canadian women are having far fewer babies than ever before. By 1997, over the course of their childbearing years, women were having only 1.5 children on average, down from nearly four in 1959. There were about 349,000 babies born in 1997 – a drop of nearly 5% from the previous year and the biggest decline since 1987.

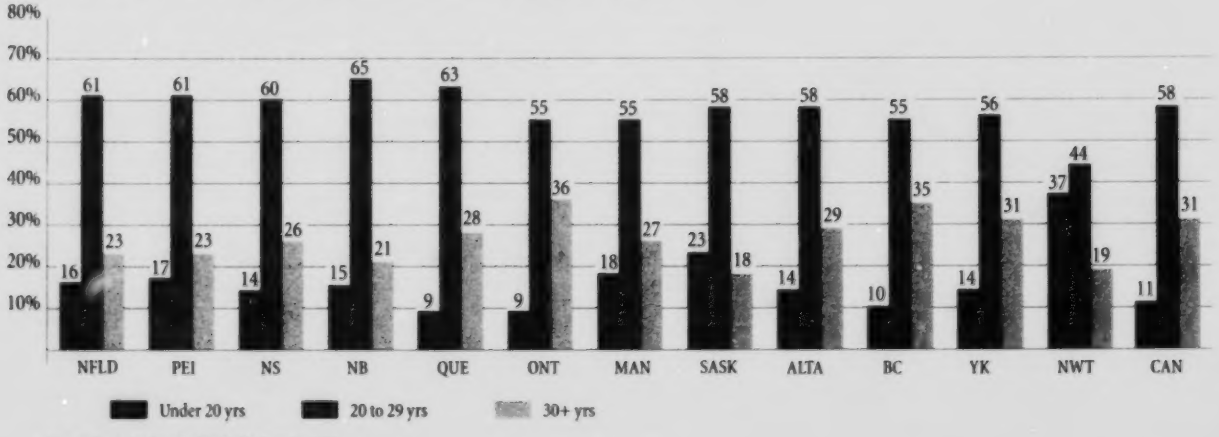
Therefore, families are smaller

In 1976, 34% of all families with children at home had only one child; by 1998, that number had increased to 41%. And while 14% of families in 1976 had four or more children, this number decreased to 4% in 1998.

Mothers are older

Almost one of every three first-born babies in 1997 had mothers aged 30 or older, compared to about one in five a decade earlier. While women in their 20s continued to have the majority of first-borns, their share of the total slipped from nearly 70% in 1987 to under 60%. The rate of first births for teenaged mothers remained at 11% throughout the decade. ●

FIRST BIRTHS BY MOTHER'S AGE, CANADA AND THE PROVINCES, 1997



Source: Statistics Canada, The Daily, *June 16, 1999.*

GROWING UP IN CANADA

How do we know whether children and youth have what they need to become healthy, self-reliant adults? In this section of *The Progress of Canada's Children,* we assess five broad social and economic indicators that are critical to the life chances of Canadian children:

- family life
- economic security
- physical safety
- community resources
- civic vitality.

Within each of these five broad indicators, we examine specific determinants of well-being such as the effects on children of school environments, family incomes, and the quality of the physical environment.

Taken together, these determinants represent the investments that families, communities, and society make in our children and youth. The success of today's young people reflects social, economic and civic investments made in the past. While factors such as adequate family incomes, parental involvement, or access to health and social services do not always guarantee that children and youth will be happy and healthy, they increase the odds that Canadian children will thrive and become successful, contributing citizens.

Family Dynamics

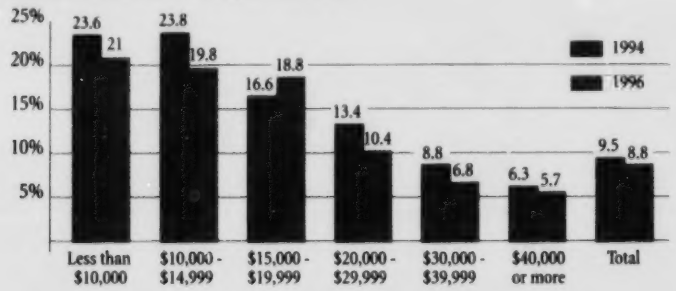
In a rapidly changing world, changes in family structures, mobility, employment and economic security have a major impact on how family members relate to each other. *Progress* uses data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY) to track the following indicators of family dynamics: parental depression, the quality of family relationships, parenting styles, and the use of physical punishment. All of these affect how families nurture children.

The good news is that from 1994 to 1996, the majority of Canadian families continued to cope very well, and by several indicators, improved. The bad news is that some families are struggling because of their economic circumstances.

Depression

Parental or caregiver depression can have a profound effect on the development and well-being of a child. Depressed parents are often despondent about the future, they lack energy and are emotionally withdrawn. Fortunately, the vast majority of children up to age 11 do not live with parents who are depressed – only 8.8% do, down slightly from 1994 when the proportion was 9.5%. This rate is consistent across all age groups and continues for children aged 12 and 13. However, the 1996 data again showed that parental depression is associated with household income: as families moved up the income scale, the proportion of children living with a depressed parent decreased.

CHILDREN UNDER 12 WITH A DEPRESSED PARENT, BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME, 1994 & 1996



Note: Household incomes are in constant 1994 dollars.
Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the NLSCY, 1994 and 1996.

Family relationships

The quality of family relationships is particularly important for children's healthy development, and research has shown a significant connection between family "dysfunction" and mental health problems among children. The NLSCY measures family functioning by looking at how well a family works together – for example, how they solve problems, communicate, treat each other emotionally, and assume their various roles.

The majority of Canadian children live in families that function well, and this improved slightly between 1994 and 1996. In 1996, 93% of children up to age 13 lived in such families, with only 7% in families considered to be "dysfunctional." Younger children were more likely than older kids to live in families that were having difficulty

functioning: 8.5% of children under age 3 lived in poorly functioning families, compared to 6.3% of children aged 12 to 13. Once again, however, households with higher incomes had a lower proportion of children considered to be in "dysfunctional" families than were found in lower-income households.

Between 1994 and 1996, the proportion of children under age 11 in families having difficulty functioning declined from 8.5% to 7.3%. This decline occurred among all but two income groups.

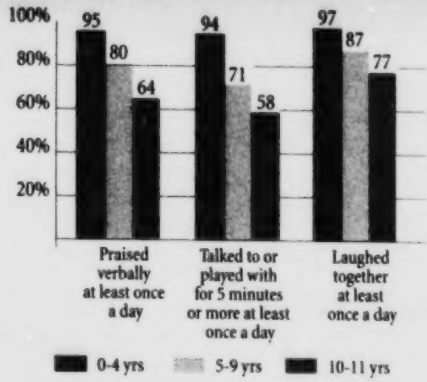
Parenting styles

Positive and consistent parenting styles have long been recognized as critical to healthy child development. Fortunately, most parents in 1996 reported positive interactions and a consistent approach to discipline, as they had in 1994. The data also showed that parents are more likely to adopt a positive parenting style with younger children than with older ones. Using a scale from 1 to 20 to measure positive parenting behaviours – such as praise, talking, playing, and laughing together – 82% of parents of young children up to 23 months of age had scores of 16 or higher. However, positive parenting behaviour was less common as children grew older, with only 29% of parents of children aged 2 to 11 scoring 16 or higher. The majority of parents said they tried to be consistent in the ways they parented and disciplined their children.

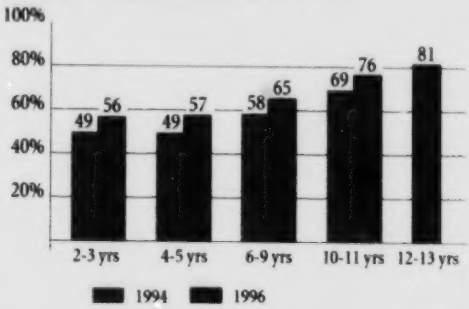
Physical punishment

There is growing evidence that using physical punishment can have a negative impact on a child's mental health. In Canada, the majority of parents do not use physical punishment with their children. In 1996, 64% of children aged 2 to 11 lived with parents who said they never use physical punishment, up from 56% in 1994. A further 28.5% lived with parents who rarely use physical punishment, and 7.5% lived with parents who sometimes, often or always use physical punishment. Parents are less likely to use physical punishment with older children than with younger children. ●

CHILDREN RAISED WITH POSITIVE PARENTING, 1996

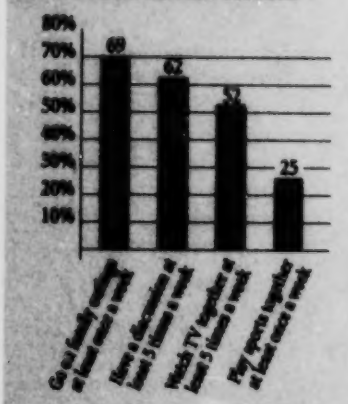


CHILDREN WHOSE PARENTS NEVER USE PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT, 1994 & 1996



Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the NLSCY, 1994 and 1996.

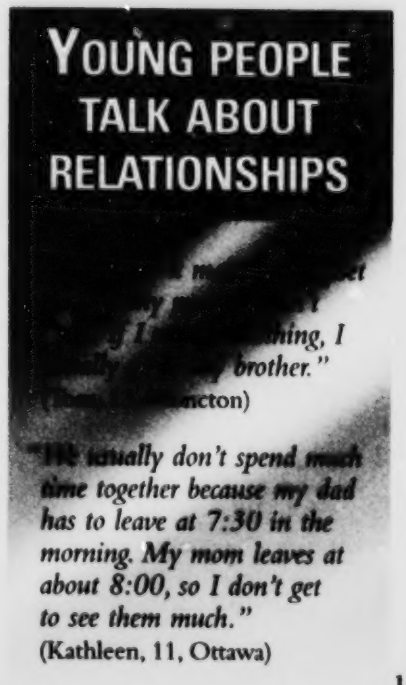
CHILDREN AGED 12 TO 13 IN FAMILIES IN 1996 WHICH:



Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the NLSCY, 1996.

Spending time with teens

As young teens undergo physical changes and move towards independence, their relationships with their parents necessarily change. Spending time with them can be a challenge, yet it is an important ingredient of supportive parenting. In 1996, the NLSCY captured data on how parents spent time with their young teens aged 12 to 13. The chart shows that the majority of families find a variety of ways to spend time with their young teenagers. ●


YOUNG PEOPLE TALK ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS
brother."
"We actually don't spend much time together because my dad has to leave at 7:30 in the morning. My mom leaves at about 8:00, so I don't get to see them much."
(Kathleen, 11, Ottawa)

functioning: 8.5% of children under age 3 lived in poorly functioning families, compared to 6.3% of children aged 12 to 13. Once again, however, households with higher incomes had a lower proportion of children considered to be in "dysfunctional" families than were found in lower-income households.

Between 1994 and 1996, the proportion of children under age 11 in families having difficulty functioning declined from 8.5% to 7.3%. This decline occurred among all but two income groups.

Parenting styles

Positive and consistent parenting styles have long been recognized as critical to healthy child development. Fortunately, most parents in 1996 reported positive interactions and a consistent approach to discipline, as they had in 1994. The data also showed that parents are more likely to adopt a positive parenting style with younger children than with older ones. Using a scale from 1 to 20 to measure positive parenting behaviours – such as praise, talking, playing, and laughing together – 82% of parents of young children up to 23 months of age had scores of 16 or higher. However, positive parenting behaviour was less common as children grew older, with only 29% of parents of children aged 2 to 11 scoring 16 or higher. The majority of parents said they tried to be consistent in the ways they parented and disciplined their children.

Physical punishment

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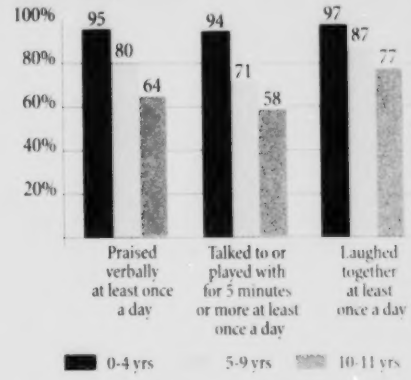

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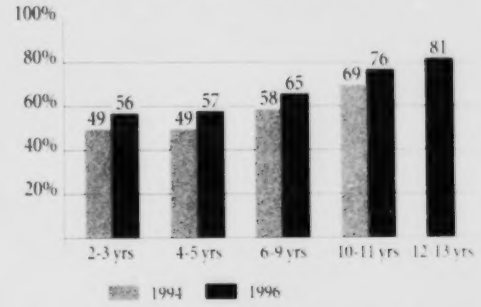

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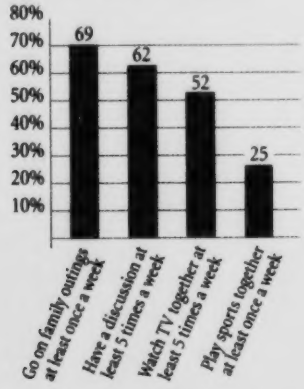

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YOUNG PEOPLE TALK ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

[illegible] it makes me upset [illegible] my parents aren't there. If I need something, I usually go to my brother."
(Tom, 13, Moncton)

"We usually don't spend much time together because my dad has to leave at 7:30 in the morning. My mom leaves at about 8:00, so I don't get to see them much."
(Kathleen, 11, Ottawa)

Combining work and family life creates tension

by Linda Duxbury & Chris Higgins

Families in which both parents work outside the home have become the norm in Canada – a trend dramatically different than 25 years ago, when most husbands had paid jobs and most women stayed home with the children. Today, 72% of children in two-parent families have both parents working outside the home. For children with lone parents working outside the home, the number is also rising – from 61% in 1995, to 68% in 1998.

One result of this trend is an increase in the number of children and youth living with high levels of stress at home because their parents find it hard to balance their work and family responsibilities. We studied Canadian workers in 1991 and 1998 and found that:

- The number of workers with dependants who reported excess tension due to work/family conflicts remained high throughout the 1990s – 38% in 1991 and 44% in 1998.
- Women with dependants experience higher levels of tension between work and family than do men, although the number of men reporting work/family conflicts is rising.
- More professional men and women report higher rates of work/family conflict than do non-professional workers.
- Workers with dependants consistently report higher levels of conflict than do those without dependants.
- Parents with children under age 5 and over age 12 report the highest levels of work/family conflict. This indicates that our early childcare provisions are inadequate for most families, and we don't have enough community supports for parent of teens and for teens themselves.

Work/family stress creates problems

Parents who experience conflict between their work and family lives are more likely to suffer from stress, depression and poorer physical health. Stress levels among parents are rising, even though the number reporting work/family conflict was relatively constant in the 1990s. More women than men and more professional workers than non-professionals report high stress levels.

Large numbers of children are now living with parents who are depressed due to their work/family conflicts. About 28% of professional men and a staggering 43% of non-professional women with dependants report high levels of depressed mood.

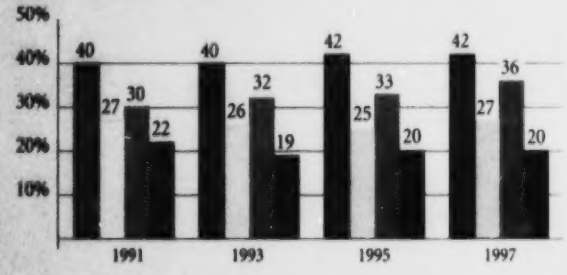
More people are also finding that they have less flexibility at the workplace to allow them to meet their family obligations. They experience very high levels of job insecurity, which adds to their stress.

Our research indicates that few Canadian organizations have provided their employees with the supports needed to balance their work and family obligations. We urgently need policies and programs that would help eliminate the tensions experienced by both children and parents in trying to balance their work and family lives. ✹

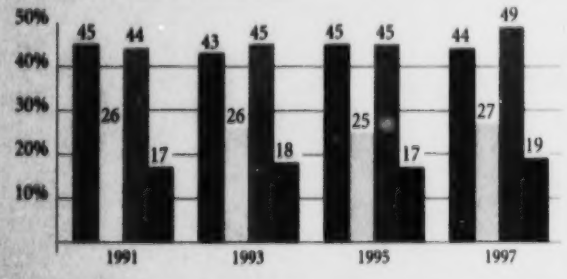
Linda Duxbury is a Professor at the School of Business at Carleton University in Ottawa. Chris Higgins is a Professor at the Richard Ivey School of Business at the University of Western Ontario in London.

Throughout the 1990s, the proportion of children in two-parent families where both parents worked outside the home remained high – at about 70%. Young children were as likely as older kids to have dual-working parents. The proportion of children in lone-parent families with the parent working outside the home increased.

CHILDREN UNDER AGE 7 WITH PARENTS IN THE WORKFORCE, 1991-1997



CHILDREN & YOUTH UNDER AGE 18 WITH PARENTS IN THE WORKFORCE, 1991-1997



Family type: Both parents work full-time; Lone parent works full-time; 1-parent works full-time, 1 works part-time; Lone parent works part-time

Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using Statistics Canada's Survey of Consumer Finances microdata, selected years.

Parenting knowledge is weaker than expected

When the Invest in Kids Foundation took a national survey of parents, gaps in parents' knowledge about their children's development became distressingly clear. The survey was designed to determine whether parents of children under six "have the knowledge, skills and confidence to ensure the best start in life." The results showed parents' knowledge to be "a mile wide and an inch deep," according to Nancy Birnbaum, President of Invest in Kids. Encouraging signs were that nearly all parents said being a parent was the most important job they could do, and 85% knew that babies learn from the moment they are born.

Less encouraging was the finding that only 50% of parents knew for certain that a child's intellectual development was directly affected by their own emotional closeness, and only 34% knew for certain that a child's experiences in the first three years affects how well they will do in school. The survey also found that one-third of parents had trouble understanding their child's feelings and needs, while half said they lacked parenting skills. "Parents are not confident in their abilities as parents," says Dr. Carol Crill Russell, the Foundation's Vice President of research and programs.

Dr. Russell attributes these gaps in parental knowledge to gaps in Canada's education system. "I think it's important for people to know as much about human development as they do about any other topic," she says. In the meantime, the Foundation has sponsored public awareness and education campaigns to change Canadians' attitudes about young children. "If we know that the early years are important, and we know how to enhance child development, I think we'll be a lot further ahead."

Dr. Russell emphasizes that ensuring good child development involves not just parents, but all Canadians. Only 40% of the parents surveyed mostly agreed with the statement: "I think Canada values its young children." While cutbacks to children's services may have contributed to this view, Dr. Russell says parents are directly affected by public attitudes they confront daily. "Parents don't live in a vacuum. And they tell us they don't feel welcome in public places today unless their kids are silent and obedient." ✸

Youth delay leaving home

Shannon Tompkins, 21, is typical of a growing number of young people who are living with their parents beyond their 18th birthday. Statistics Canada reports that from 1981 to 1996, the percentage of young women aged 20 to 34 living at home increased from 16 to 23%; for young men, the percentage rose from 26 to 33%. For youth aged 20 to 24 still living at home, the proportion jumped from 43% in 1981 to nearly 57% by 1996. Most of these increases coincided with economic recessions in the early 1980s and 1990s.

Young adults living at home are more likely to be older. In 1981, about one-quarter of unmarried women and men who lived with their parents were 25 or older; by 1996, this had risen to 33% and 40%, respectively.

Shannon, a Kanata, Ontario resident, says the cost of university and a lack of good jobs are the two main reasons that she and most of her friends live at home. Although she works 25 hours a week, it would be nearly impossible to save for university if she were paying rent as well. While Tompkins enjoys a good rapport with her parents, she feels she's delaying some of the challenges that come with independent living. "I'm not as responsible as I think I should be. But when I move out, I want to make sure that I'm stable and comfortable." ✸

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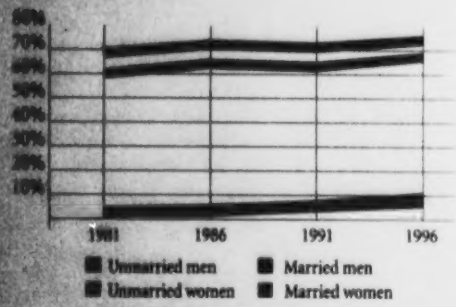

Source: M. Boyd and D. Norris, "The crowded nest: Young adults at home," in Canadian Social Trends, Spring, 1999.

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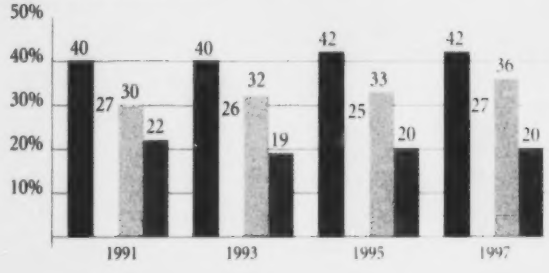

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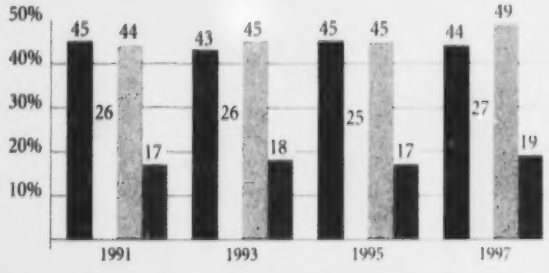

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5 of 13

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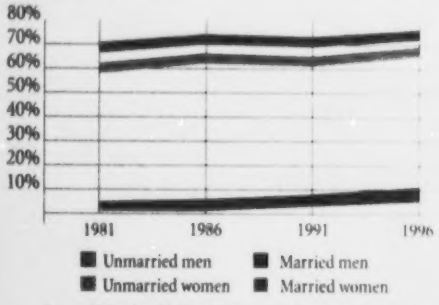


Source: M. Boyd and D. Norris, "The crowded nest: Young adults at home," in Canadian Social Trends, *Spring, 1999.*

Economic Security

Economic security refers to an assured standard of living that can provide families with the level of resources and benefits necessary to participate economically, politically, socially, culturally, and with dignity in their community's activities.

Divisions in economic security have grown

by David P. Ross

Between 1989 and 1997 – two similar points in the business cycle – the top 40% of income-earning families with children had their share of earnings improve. Families with incomes in the bottom 40% experienced a drop in their share of earnings, and those in the middle 20% had no improvement, but no decline either.

It is worrisome that as the Canadian economy improved over the 1990s, disparities in family income levels grew. In 1989, the poorest Canadian families brought home 17% of all earnings, but by 1996 their share had dropped to only 13% – representing a shift of several billion dollars of the total income pool away from poor families and to families already at the top end of the scale.

Family characteristics:	% living in poverty 1991	% living in poverty 1996
Female lone-parent	60	61
Parents under age 25	36	42
Visible minority	27	43
Children's characteristics:		
Aboriginal	not available	52
Child has disability	27	37
All children	19	21

Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the 1991 and 1996 Census.

A child's chances of experiencing poverty in the 1990s increased if they lived with young parents or a lone parent, or if a parent was disabled or a member of a visible minority group.

For the bottom 60% of families, their economic security was squeezed further by a decade of fiscal restraint. Cutbacks in government spending at all levels led to increased demands on families to pay more out of their own pockets for public services such as health care, public education, housing, recreation and cultural activities. Families were also expected to take more responsibility for their own well-being and to rely less on government assistance.

A child's chances of experiencing poverty in the 1990s increased if they lived with young parents or a lone parent, or if a parent was disabled or a member of a visible minority group. Unfortunately, the situation faced by these children and families shows few signs of improvement. If the trends of the 1990s persist, children in families at the top 40% of the income-earnings scale will continue to do well in the next millennium, while those in the bottom 40% will slide further downhill economically. ✹

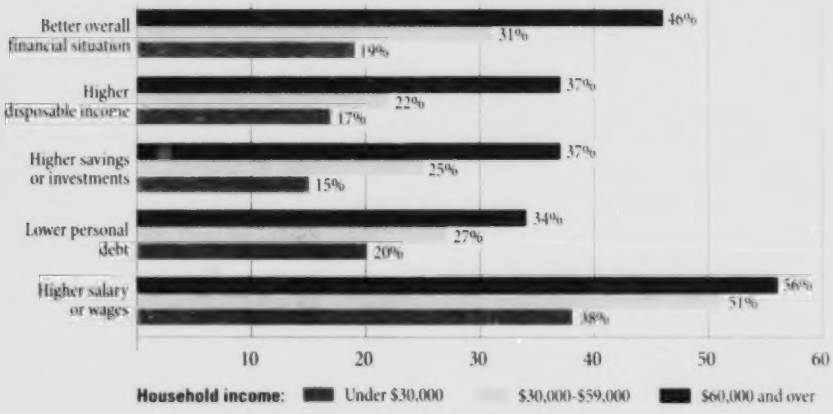
David P. Ross is an economist and former executive director of the Canadian Council on Social Development.

Are all Canadians profiting from the economic recovery?

By 1999, Canada's economy was firing on all cylinders. Unemployment rates were dropping and for some people, incomes were growing. According to a 1999 Angus Reid survey:

- 56% of Canadians with incomes over $60,000 said they were earning more now than they had two or three years ago, but only 38% of Canadians with incomes under $30,000 could make the same claim.
- Only one-third of Canadians said they were in a better financial shape today than they had been two or three years ago, and nearly 70% said their financial situation was the same or worse. Almost half the people surveyed with household incomes over $60,000 said their financial situation had improved, but less than one-fifth of those with household incomes under $30,000 reported an improvement.
- Nearly half of Canadians said they had less disposable income today than they had two or three years ago, 30% said they had about the same, and one-quarter said they had more disposable income. Over half the people with household incomes under $30,000 said their disposable income had declined, compared to only 38% of people with incomes over $60,000.
- Most Canadians have not reduced their personal debt loads over the last two or three years. Almost one-third reported having higher debts, nearly half had the same level of debt, and only one-quarter carried less debt. Higher-income Canadians were the most likely to report that their personal debt load had declined. ✸

ECONOMIC SECURITY OF CANADIANS COMPARED TO 2 OR 3 YEARS AGO ...



Source: Angus Reid Group/Globe & Mail, National opinion poll, September 6, 1999.

Poverty is . . .

- *wishing you could go to McDonald's*
- *getting a basket from the Santa Fund*
- *feeling ashamed when my dad can't get a job*
- *not buying books at the book fair*
- *not getting to go to birthday parties*
- *hearing my mom and dad fight over money*
- *not ever getting a pet because it costs too much*
- *wishing you had a nice house*
- *not being able to go camping*
- *not getting a hot dog on hot dog day*
- *not being able to have your friends sleep over*
- *pretending that you forgot your lunch*
- *being afraid to tell mom that you need gym shoes*
- *not having any breakfast sometimes*
- *not being able to play hockey*
- *hiding your feet so the teacher won't get cross when you don't have boots*
- *not being able to go to Cubs or play soccer*
- *not being able to take swimming lessons*
- *not being able to afford a holiday*
- *not having pretty barrettes for your hair*
- *being teased for the way you are dressed*
- *not getting to go on school trips.*

Children in Grades 4 & 5, North Bay, Ontario

Child poverty rates are still too high

The number of children living in poverty dropped by nearly 7% between 1996 and 1997 – to about 1.4 million. But there were still about 50% more poor children than in 1989 when the House of Commons passed a unanimous resolution to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000.

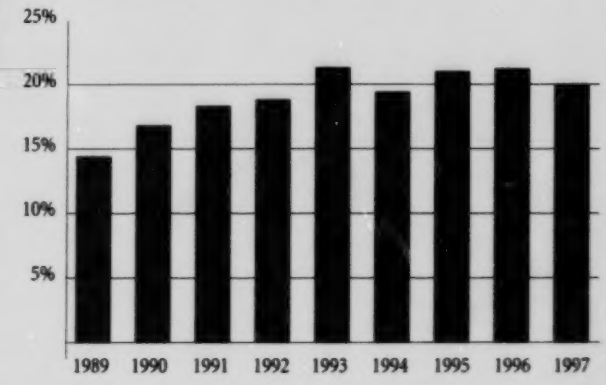
Although most poor children live in two-parent families, children living with a lone parent are still far more likely to be poor than those in two-parent families.

There are significant differences in child poverty trends among the provinces. In Ontario, child poverty has almost doubled since 1989; in other provinces it has risen less dramatically, and the child poverty rate in Alberta and Saskatchewan has dropped slightly below the 1989 level.

The depth of poverty

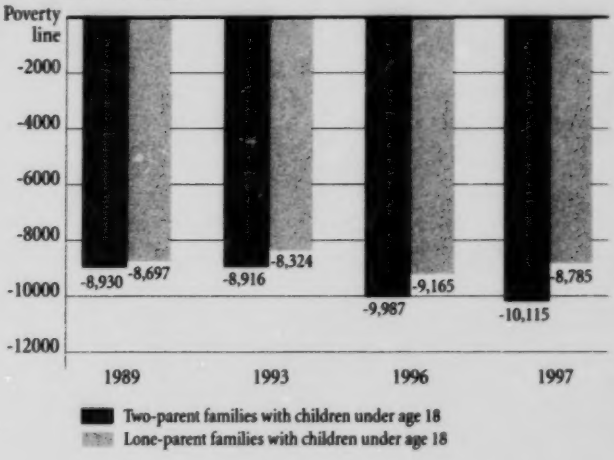
Although there were fewer poor children in 1997 than in 1996, they were generally worse off. The average poor lone-parent family in 1997 would have needed nearly $8,800 more just to reach the poverty line, and two-parent families needed more than $10,000. This depth of poverty worsened for both types of poor families between 1989 and 1997. ✹

CHILD POVERTY IN CANADA, 1989-1997

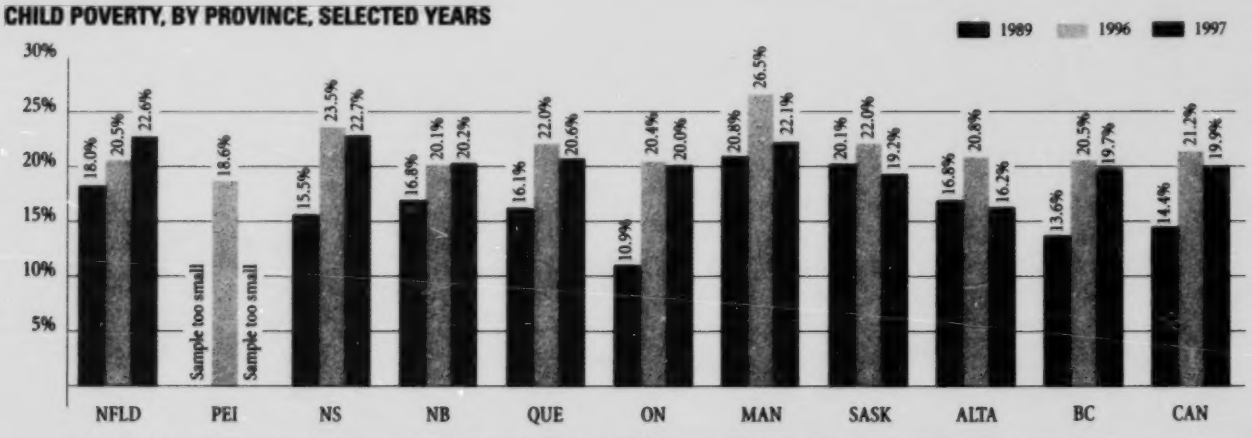


AVERAGE POVERTY GAP, BY FAMILY TYPE, SELECTED YEARS

In constant 1997 dollars.



CHILD POVERTY, BY PROVINCE, SELECTED YEARS



Note: Poverty is measured using Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-offs (LICOs), 1986 base for 1989 to 1991, and 1992 base for 1992 to 1997. Head and spouse less than age 65.
Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using microdata from Statistics Canada's Survey of Consumer Finances, 1998.

How do families spend their money?

Spending patterns among families with children showed little change from 1996 to 1997, with personal income taxes continuing to represent the largest single expenditure for two-parent families and shelter representing the largest cost for lone-parent families. The average amount spent by two-parent households with children – on everything from food and shelter to child care, taxes and transportation – was $67,274, compared to $35,573 for lone-parent households.

The average income of two-parent families with children in 1997 was $69,446 (before tax), compared to $32,596 for lone-parent families.

Among all Canadians, households spent 15% more on health care between 1996 and 1997. This increase was due mainly to spending on medicines, pharmaceutical products, and health insurance premiums. The one-fifth of households with the lowest incomes increased their spending on health care by 23%, compared to an increase of 12% for the one-fifth of households with the highest incomes. Two-parent families with children spent an average of $1,370 on health care and lone-parent families spent $790.

Among all Canadians, spending on education increased by 19% to an average of $860 per household in 1997. The increase was due largely to a rise in spending on post-secondary tuition fees. On average, two-parent families with children spent $1,214 on education, while lone-parent families spent $716.

Among all Canadians, expenditures on recreation – covering everything from playground equipment to movie admissions – rose by 5% in 1997. Two-parent families spent an average of $897 on recreation and lone-parent families spent $547. ✸

AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD* EXPENDITURES OF FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN, 1997

	Family type	
	Two-parent	Lone-parent
Personal taxes	23.1%	13.6%
Shelter	18.8%	23.6%
Food	11.2%	13.6%
Transportation	12.4%	11.7%
Personal insurance payments & pension	6.1%	5.1%
Recreation	5.9%	5.5%
Clothing	4.6%	4.9%
Household operations	3.6%	4.7%
Household furnishings & equipment	2.6%	2.5%
Health care	2.0%	2.2%
Education	1.8%	2%
Gifts of money & contributions	1.4%	2.3%
Personal care	1.3%	1.5%
Child care	1.0%	1.1%
Other	4.1%	5.6%
Total amount spent (100%)	$67,274	$35,573

** Note: Two-parent and lone-parent households include all never-married children of any age, including foster children.*

Source: Statistics Canada, Spending Patterns in Canada, 1997, *1999.*

Access to parental benefits affects infants' first year

The first year of life is a critical part of a child's healthy development, but economic concerns are influencing whether or not women are able to spend this time with their babies. These economic concerns mean that more than half of mothers in the labour force return to work before their child is seven months old. Recent research has shown that access to maternity benefits from the employment insurance program (EI) makes a big difference in the speed with which mothers return to their jobs after their child is born.

Changes to employment insurance rules have made it harder for new mothers to qualify for benefits. Since 1996, the minimum number of hours needed to qualify for maternity benefits has jumped from 300 to 700, and women working part-time must work many more weeks before they are eligible for benefits. As a result of these changes, fewer women who work part-time and have lower earnings are eligible for EI maternity benefits. The vast majority of self-employed women are excluded. In 1998, less than half the mothers of newborns received any maternity benefits at all.

A recent study found that 21% of the nearly 370,000 women in the workforce who gave birth in 1993 or 1994 were back to work by the end of the first month after their child was born. About 42% of the mothers returned to work five to seven months after the birth. Women who received no maternity benefits and those who were self-employed returned to their jobs more quickly than mothers who received maternity benefits.

About one-third (34%) of the women who returned to work within one month after the birth of their baby were self-employed, compared to just 2% who returned to work later. Sixty per cent of the new mothers who were back at work by the end of the first month had received no EI benefits, compared to just 9% of mothers who took between two and 24 months before returning to work. ✸

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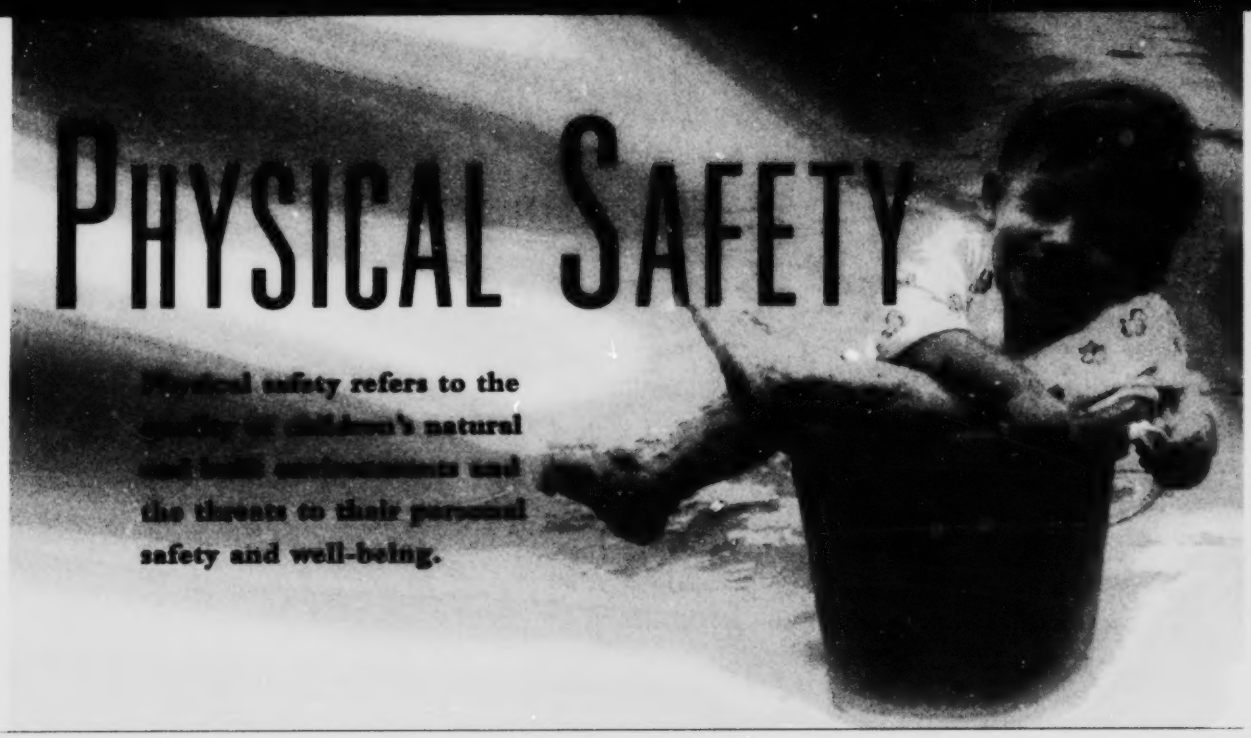

PHYSICAL SAFETY

Physical safety refers to the [illegible] children's natural and built environments and the threats to their personal safety and well-being.

Canada needs stronger environmental protection for children

by Graham Chance

As we wrestle with the question of how much chemical contaminants are contributing to trends such as increased infertility, learning disabilities, asthma, and cancers, it is important to keep one thing in mind: scientists continue to find significant, often permanent effects at surprisingly low doses.

There is growing evidence that many children's health problems are brought on or exacerbated by environmental pollution. Here are some examples of major environmental health problems affecting children:

- Asthma among children and youth has increased dramatically over the last decade. It is now the leading cause of hospital admissions for children in Canada and many other countries.
- Children exposed to tobacco smoke at home have more days of restricted activity, bed confinement, and missed school days each year than other children. In Canada, 33% of children under 12 are regularly exposed to tobacco smoke in their home, with rates as high as 44% in Quebec and PEI, and 43% in Newfoundland.
- Polluted waters can affect children when they are in contact with rivers or lakes and through the consumption of certain freshwater fish.
- Children may face developmental defects to their endocrine and immune systems and neurobehavioural toxic effects as a result of exposure to pesticides, organic pollutants and other chemicals.

Unfortunately, there is little consensus among scientists and governments about why – or if – exposure to toxic chemicals in the environment is having damaging health effects. Due to a lack of proper surveys, surveillance systems and databases, we do not have enough information in Canada about children and environmental contaminants.

But we *do* know that child development, from conception to adolescence, is a delicate and complex process that may be harmed by environmental pollution. If toxic exposure occurs during critical growth stages, the systems affected can sustain permanent damage. Babies in utero and infants are at particular risk because their brains are undergoing complex development, and the majority of that growth is not correctable later in life.

Canada's best approach to minimize environmental hazards for children would be to adopt into law the precautionary principle that has already been set in eight European countries. This principle means that when there is evidence that a contaminant is creating health hazards – even if it is not fully conclusive – we should take legal precautions so that humans – *and especially children* – are not exposed to those substances. ●

Graham Chance is a medical doctor and former Chair of the Canadian Institute of Child Health.

YOUNG PEOPLE TALK ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT

"...with ...billion."
(...ontreal)

"I think our generation is a lot more concerned about the environment than our parents were."
(Dawn, 24, Ottawa)

"Canada is one of the most poorly regulated countries in terms of pollution."
(Jean, 19, Montreal)

Mouldy schools create environmental hazards

Across Canada, children's exposure to toxins from moulds in schools is becoming a problem. For some, exposure to mould causes severe allergic reactions, headaches and nausea.

Moulds have been reported in three schools in PEI, two in Manitoba, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and two school buildings in BC. Several school basements in Newfoundland are also suspect. The problem in Ontario is widespread.

The most serious problem is stachybotrys chartarum, a black mould that grows on materials like paper, wallboard and ceiling tiles – materials common in most portables. Stachybotrys is known to have killed livestock in Europe and has been linked to nine infant deaths in Cleveland, Ohio.

Mould could potentially become a nationwide health hazard because most portables were built using the same design and materials. In Ontario, 4,000 of the approximately 10,000 portables in use have surpassed their 15-year lifespan. And while new portables are designed to resist mould and provide better ventilation, cash-strapped school boards often cannot afford them.

Ontario's Peel and Durham school boards have taken steps to eliminate mould contamination. Since 1991, officials in the Durham region have monitored the indoor air quality, and windows and exhaust fans are caulked every two years as part of a preventative maintenance program. When officials in Peel found mould in almost all of their portables, those that could not be repaired or renovated were simply torn down and permanent additions built. ✸

Pesticide control lags

Almost all North Americans have detectable levels of pesticides in them. One US study found that children ingest pesticides at high rates because they consume more fruits and juices for their body weights than do adults, and both fruits and juices often contain pesticide residues, even after washing and processing.

In Canada, there is no systematic data collection on average food consumption or pesticide residues in food. The Canadian Institute of Child Health says scientists are still using food consumption data that was collected in 1972.

There are more than 23,000 chemicals used in Canada in food preservatives, agricultural and household pesticides, dry cleaning fluids, fuels and other products, but little is known about their effects or risks. The law governing the use of pesticides is 30 years old, despite government commitments to reform it. According to the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, Canada lags behind other countries in re-evaluating pesticides that were approved years ago when standards were lower. This creates unknown risks to the health of today's children and youth. ✸

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"Fresh, clean water. I think that will be an issue with a population of 6 billion." (Tom, 20, Montreal)

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Fewer youth die in road crashes

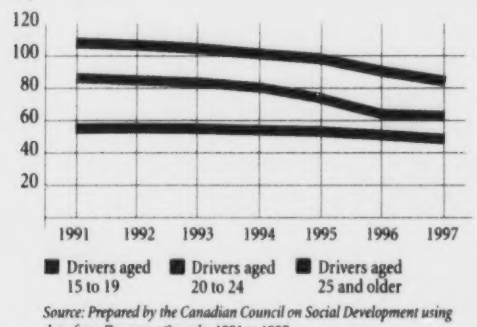
Motor vehicle crashes are the most common cause of injury-related deaths of young people. In 1996, they killed nearly 800 youth aged 15 to 24 and injured 60,000 more. The motor vehicle death rate for youth was twice that of the population as a whole, and young men were the most frequent victims. In 1996, the death rate for young men aged 15 to 19 was 23 per 100,000, compared to a rate of 12 for young women of that age. For men aged 20 to 24, the rate was three times higher than for young women – 28 vs 9.

Although these rates are unacceptably high, they have been declining. One reason is that six provinces have adopted graduated licensing systems for new drivers of all ages. These systems extend the learning process for new drivers and allow them to gain experience by initially restricting them to low-risk situations, then gradually removing the restrictions. The first provinces to develop graduated licensing were Nova Scotia and Ontario in 1994. Since then, BC, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Quebec have followed suit.

- In Ontario, before graduated licensing, 16-year-old drivers had collision rates about three times higher than those of the general population. Since the system was implemented, the fatal collision rate for 16-year-old drivers dropped to the level of the general population, and the overall collision rate is actually lower.
- In Nova Scotia there was a 24% decrease in collisions by 16-year-old drivers during the first year of the graduated licensing program and a 37% decrease over the first three years of the program.
- In Quebec, a preliminary study found a 12% net decrease in the number of drivers with learner's and intermediate licences involved in accidents causing bodily injury. There was also a 12% net drop in the number of people killed or seriously injured by drivers with learner's and intermediate licences. ✸

CANADIAN DRIVERS INJURED AND KILLED, 1991-1997

Rate per 10,000



Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Transport Canada, 1991 to 1997.

YOUNG PEOPLE TALK ABOUT SCHOOLS

"It's a big school and it's kind of scary sometimes because of what happened at Columbine."
(Adriana, 13, Ottawa)

"There are some bullies at my school. They threaten people if they say the wrong thing."
(Sharon, 14, Moncton)

"At my old school, it was mostly verbal stuff, but sometimes you saw a person throwing someone against a locker."
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YOUNG PEOPLE TALK ABOUT LICENCES

"I think it was too easy before to get a licence. Driving a car is a big responsibility. You have to have the patience to go through this program."
(Steve, 21, Ottawa)

"A lot of young people are overconfident. They've waited 16 years, and now they've got their licence. It's a big thing."
(Frank, 18, Moncton)

Crime rates continue to fall

Although television and movie theatres abound with [illegible] levels of violence, and people believe that crime [illegible] are rising, Canada is actually becoming a safer [illegible] for children and youth.

[illegible] measurement is subject to reporting difficulties, [illegible] that crime rates continue to drop in [illegible]. Between 1991 and 1998, the crime rate fell for [illegible] consecutive year, reaching its lowest point in [illegible] years. Since 1991, the national crime rate has [illegible] by almost 22%.

[illegible] crimes – about 12% of all crimes reported – fell [illegible] consecutive year. Most violent crimes (82%) [illegible] assaults. Of police-reported assaults, 28% [illegible] are children or youth under 18 who account for

Do children feel safe at school?

Over the last year, there has been media attention on bullying behaviour in schools. The NLSCY asks young people about how safe they feel at school.

Slightly over half (55%) of all Canadian children aged 10 to 13 say they feel safe at school all the time; another third (36%) feel safe most of the time, and 10% feel safe only some of the time, rarely or never. Overall, children feel the same about going to and from school: 62% feel safe all the time, 29% feel safe most of the time, and 9% feel safe going to or from school only sometimes, rarely or never. Among 10- and 11-year-olds, these proportions remained virtually unchanged between 1994 and 1996.

Younger children are less likely to feel safe at school, or going to and from school than are older children.

Why do children feel unsafe at school?

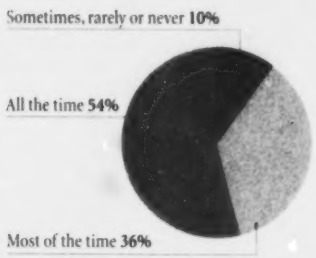
- 26% of children aged 10 to 13 say that other kids say mean things to them all, most, or some of the time.
- 9% are bullied in school all, most, or some of the time.
- 4% say they are bullied on the way to school all, most, or some of the time.
- 14% say they feel left out all, most, or some of the time.

How do schools handle these situations?

Adults in schools can have a profound effect on how safe children feel, and they can set a tone of intolerance for violence. When asked in the NLSCY, 88% of teachers of 10- to 13-year-olds agreed or strongly agreed that they rarely overlooked physical aggression among children, and 79% reported that they rarely overlooked verbal aggression. However, there was less consensus about how agressive behaviour should be handled. Only 63% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "Teachers at this school have reached a consensus about ways to discipline children who break rules;" 19% disagreed, and 18% did not have an opinion.

Most (54%) teachers believed there were sufficient resources in the school to manage disciplinary problems, 25% did not, and 21% did not know. ✹

CHILDREN AGED 10 TO 13 WHO FEEL SAFE AT SCHOOL, 1996



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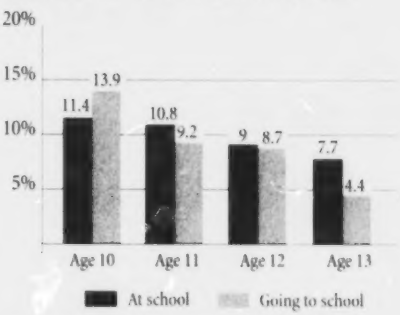
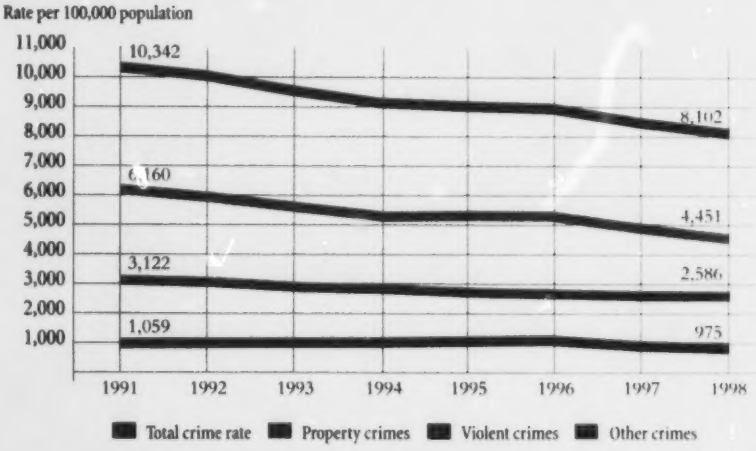


Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the NLSCY 1996.

24% of the population). The homicide rate fell by 6.2%, continuing a downward trend from the mid-70s, and the use of firearms has been decreasing steadily, from 6.5% of all violent incidents in 1994 to less than 5% in 1998. Drug offences and prostitution were among the few crimes that increased.

Most provinces have followed this national trend of lower crime rates, with the largest declines in the Yukon, PEI and Ontario. Crime rates increased only in Newfoundland, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories. Saskatchewan has reported increased crime since 1994, and the West has higher crime rates than the rest of Canada. ✹

CANADIAN CRIME RATES, 1991-1998



Source: Sylvain Tremblay, Crime Statistics in Canada, 1998. *Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1999.*

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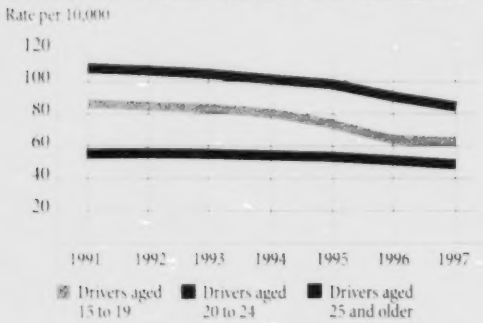

Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Transport Canada, 1991 to 1997.

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Although television and movie theatres abound with portrayals of violence, and people believe that crime rates are rising, Canada is actually becoming a safer country for children and youth.

Crime measurement is subject to reporting difficulties, but data indicate that crime rates continue to drop in Canada. Between 1997 and 1998, the crime rate fell for the seventh consecutive year, reaching its lowest point in almost 20 years. Since 1991, the national crime rate has dropped by almost 22%.

Violent crimes – about 12% of all crimes reported – fell for the sixth consecutive year. Most violent crimes (62%) are common assaults. Of police-reported assaults, 20% of victims are children or youth under 18 (who account for

Do children feel safe at school?

Over the last year, there has been media attention on bullying behaviour in schools. The NLSCY asks young people about how safe they feel at school.

Slightly over half (55%) of all Canadian children aged 10 to 13 say they feel safe at school all the time; another third (36%) feel safe most of the time, and 10% feel safe only some of the time, rarely or never. Overall, children feel the same about going to and from school: 62% feel safe all the time, 29% feel safe most of the time, and 9% feel safe going to or from school only sometimes, rarely or never. Among 10- and 11-year-olds, these proportions remained virtually unchanged between 1994 and 1996.

Younger children are less likely to feel safe at school, or going to and from school than are older children.

Why do children feel unsafe at school?

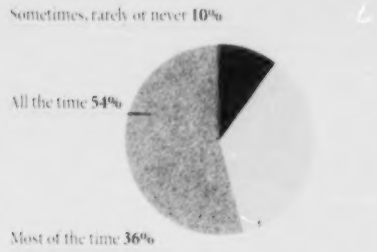
- 26% of children aged 10 to 13 say that other kids say mean things to them all, most, or some of the time.
- 9% are bullied in school all, most, or some of the time.
- 4% say they are bullied on the way to school all, most, or some of the time.
- 14% say they feel left out all, most, or some of the time.

How do schools handle these situations?

Adults in schools can have a profound effect on how safe children feel, and they can set a tone of intolerance for violence. When asked in the NLSCY, 88% of teachers of 10- to 13-year-olds agreed or strongly agreed that they rarely overlooked physical aggression among children, and 79% reported that they rarely overlooked verbal aggression. However, there was less consensus about how agressive behaviour should be handled. Only 63% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "Teachers at this school have reached a consensus about ways to discipline children who break rules;" 19% disagreed, and 18% did not have an opinion.

Most (54%) teachers believed there were sufficient resources in the school to manage disciplinary problems, 25% did not, and 21% did not know. ✹

CHILDREN AGED 10 TO 13 WHO FEEL SAFE AT SCHOOL, 1996



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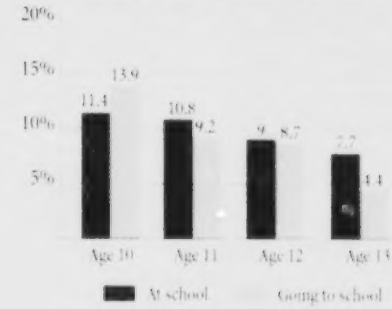
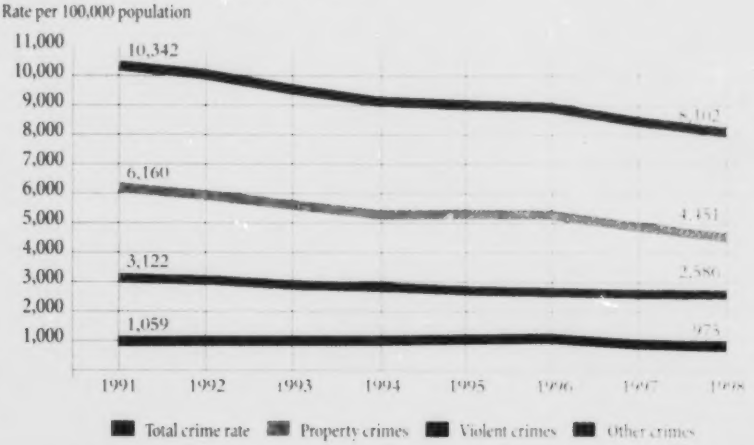


Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the NLSCY, 1996.

24% of the population). The homicide rate fell by 6.2%, continuing a downward trend from the mid-70s, and the use of firearms has been decreasing steadily, from 6.5% of all violent incidents in 1994 to less than 5% in 1998. Drug offences and prostitution were among the few crimes that increased.

Most provinces have followed this national trend of lower crime rates, with the largest declines in the Yukon, PEI and Ontario. Crime rates increased only in Newfoundland, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories. Saskatchewan has reported increased crime since 1994, and the West has higher crime rates than the rest of Canada. ✹

CANADIAN CRIME RATES, 1991-1998



Source: Sylvain Tremblay, Crime Statistics in Canada, 1998. *Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1999.*

How much pollution are children exposed to?

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) studied North American pollution. It found disturbing information about the effects of industrial pollutants sent directly into the air, land and water, or sent off-site for treatment or disposal, most often into landfills. While overall industrial pollution in the US and Canada declined in 1996, dropping 2.3% from 1995, some provinces did not fare well. Ontario has become the second-worst polluter in North America, ranked behind only Texas among all Canadian provinces and US states. Here's how the provinces stacked up. ✸

Ranking	Province	Total amount (kg) of pollutant releases and transfers	% change 1995-1996
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Source: CEC, Taking Stock: North American Pollutant Releases and Transfers: 1996, Montreal: Commission for Environmental Cooperation, 1999.

Canadian children lured into sex trade

Like the Philippines and Thailand, Canada is now a destination for people seeking sex with children, according to Jannit Rabinovitch, co-ordinator of a national project called "Out From the Shadows and Into the Light." Rabinovitch says consultations with police, public health workers and primary school teachers show that Canadian children are being bought and sold for sex. "A child sex trade exists everywhere in Canada, from large cities to remote logging camps. It happens in places that are too small to even have a name."

From April 1, 1997 to March 31, 1998, 192 charges were laid against adults for sex-related offences involving children. But experts say the number is much higher. In Vancouver alone, an estimated 100 offences occur every day.

Cherry Kingsley knows the effects of the child sex trade first-hand. Working with Rabinovitch as the project's manager and principal public speaker, she incorporates her direct experiences of the sex trade into her talks with youth, policy-makers and the media.

Sponsored by Save the Children Canada, workers with "Out From the Shadows and Into the Light" conduct public education and awareness campaigns, national workshops, and provide support for children who are trying to escape the sex trade. Kingsley is creating a national inventory of services and resources available to sexually exploited children, and with Rabinovitch, she is setting up coalitions of sexually exploited children in communities across Canada. "We have to work with youth to create the services and supports they need so that the pimps aren't the only people doing outreach." ✸

Myths surrounding the sex trade sometimes make life on the streets appear acceptable, even attractive. The reality is more likely to be a harsh, brutal life with a high degree of poverty, violence and disease.

Myth: **"You will be rich and able to buy a car and take nice holidays."**

Reality: **Freedom doesn't mean living on $10 a day in a rooming house. Your pimp will only give you money for food and cigarettes. You'd get more money on minimum wage.**

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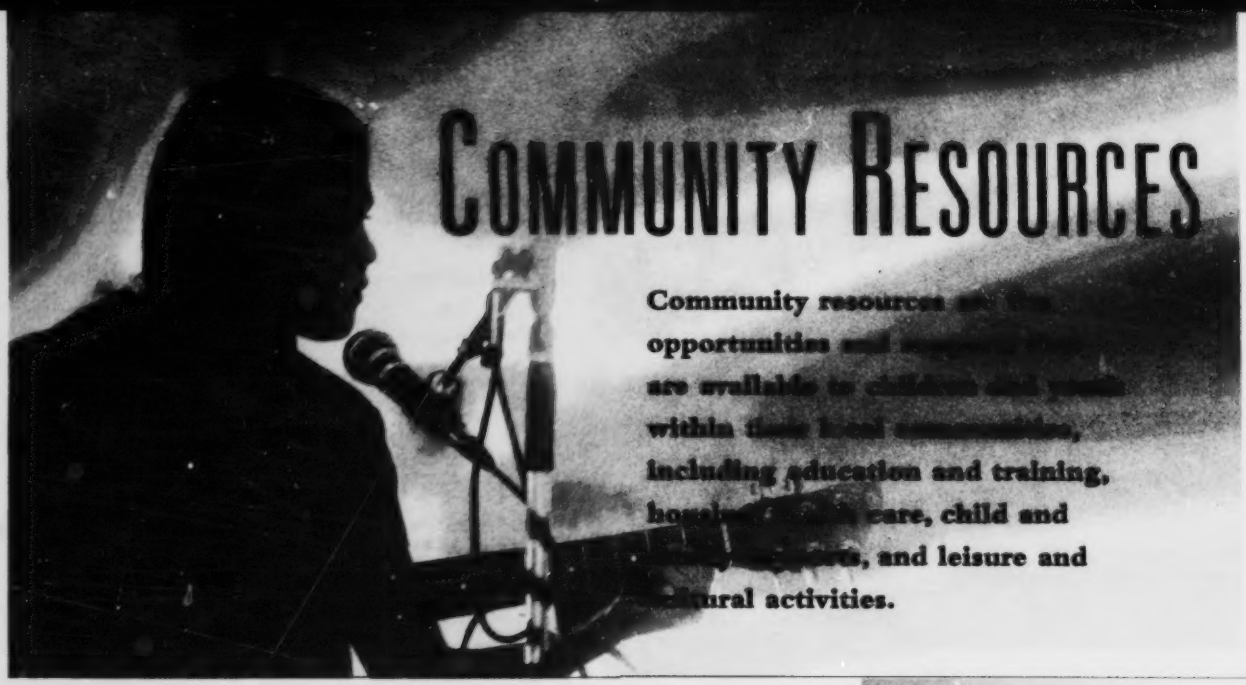

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Community resources are the opportunities and supports that are available to children and youth within their local communities, including education and training, housing, health care, child and family services, and leisure and cultural activities.

Child care support is strong while services fragment

by Martha Friendly and Donna Lero

A 1998 national poll found that nearly 90% of Canadians think high-quality child care is important to help ensure Canada's future social and economic well-being, and 81% think governments should develop a plan to improve child care. Another survey found that 76% of Canadians believe child care should be available to all families, with costs shared by governments and families.

However, despite broad public support for child care, trends in the 1990s have been contrary. Child care services have experienced increased erosion, fragmentation and disparity. Although total provincial spending on child care increased over the 1990s, federal cost-sharing was eliminated, and spending in three provinces actually decreased. The supply of regulated spaces – never adequate – was reduced or relatively static in most provinces, with new funds targeted to low-income and Aboriginal children. At the same time, some parents remain on social assistance because, like many modest- and middle-income parents, they cannot afford or find child care.

Again and again, research shows that all children – not just the poor or children at-risk – benefit from high-quality early childhood care and education services. Experts in early childhood policy agree that Canada needs a holistic, coherent system of care for children, one that supports child development and provides support for parents while they work, train or study.

In 1996, Quebec introduced a universally accessible program for early childhood development and care while parents work or train that will ultimately serve all children, including infants. By 2001, parents of children under 13 will pay $5 per day for these early childhood services, with the Quebec government covering most of the costs. The program, to be phased in over five-plus years, will incrementally expand spaces, ensure adequate wages for child care providers, and improve service coordination and delivery. This program, to be complemented by improved parental leave, is a workable model for the rest of Canada.

Quebec's approach to early childhood care and education as a basic public service is the direction we urge for Canada, using the National Children's Agenda to ensure that it becomes a centrepiece of public policy throughout Canada. ✹

Child care trends in the 1990s

- *Over the last five years, child care spaces in most provinces have either decreased or remained relatively static.*
- *Subsidies for low-income parents have not kept pace with inflation or wage trends. Four provinces subsidized fewer children in 1998 than in 1992, and in four others, subsidy eligibility levels were static over that period.*
- *Six provinces have used National Child Benefit savings from families on social assistance to increase child care spending for low-income families almost exclusively.*

A 1998 national survey of child care workers found that:

- *71% of child care teaching staff had post-secondary education, up from 58% in 1991.*
- *Their average annual salary was $22,700, ranging from $13,600 in Newfoundland to $26,500 in Ontario. (The average salary for parking lot attendants was $21,000.) In the 1990s, child care teachers gained purchasing power in only four provinces.*

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Who cares for our children?

According to the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, nearly 2 million children up to age 11 (or 43%) were cared for by someone other than their parents in 1996, while their parents worked or studied.

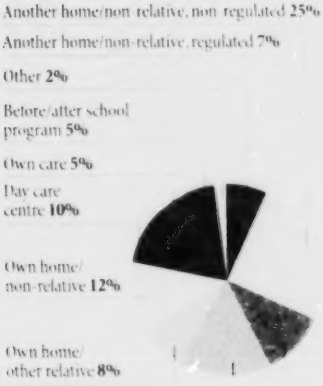
- 22% were in a regulated setting, such as a daycare centre, family home daycare, or a before/after school program.
- 19% were cared for by a relative other than a sibling.
- 16% were cared for by a sibling.
- 37% were cared for by a non-relative in a non-regulated setting.

Approximately one-quarter (24.4%) of children under age 1 were cared for by someone else while their parent(s) worked or studied. That proportion increased to 46% for children aged 1 to 5, and to 44% for those aged 6 to 11.

Overall, 21% of parents reported that they had changed their child care arrangements at least once over the past 12 months, and 6% had changed the arrangements twice or more.

- The main reasons given for the changes were that the caregiver or program was no longer available (27%), or that the family had moved or their work status or custody arrangements had changed (21%).
- 14% reported that their child's needs had changed and 13% said they were dissatisfied with the caregiver or program.
- 12% reported that a preferred arrangement became available. ✱

CHILDREN UNDER AGE 12 WHOSE PARENTS WORK OR STUDY OUTSIDE THE HOME, BY TYPE OF CHILD CARE, 1996



Note: Proportions have been rounded. Sample size was 1,980,091.
Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, 1996.

University fees continue to climb

Students returning to university in 1999 faced substantial increases in tuition fees, averaging 7% over 1998 fees. This is the smallest increase over the last several years.

Fees rose in all provinces except BC and Quebec. In BC, fees were frozen for the fifth consecutive year; in Quebec, residents' fees were frozen at $1,668, while out-of-province students faced a 10% increase (following an 8.5% increase in 1997/98). In Nova Scotia and Ontario, tuition fees remain the highest at $4,113 and $3,872 respectively.

Rising tuition fees are a direct result of government reductions in funding to universities. In the 1997/98 academic year, student fees made up almost 20% of total university revenues, up from 15% in 1993/94 and more than double the level in 1980/81. Over the same period, the share of revenues from government grants and contracts to universities decreased from 64% to 55%. ✱

AVERAGE UNDERGRADUATE ARTS TUITION 1990/91 TO 1999/2000

	1990/-1991 $	1998/1999 $	1999/2000 $	1990/91 to 1999/2000 % change	1998/99 to 1999/2000 % change
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NFLD	1,344	3,150	3,300	145.5	4.8
PEI	1,840	3,330	3,480	89.1	5.1
NS	1,943	3,904	4,113	111.7	5.3
NB	1,898	3,194	3,329	75.4	4.2
QUE*	902	2,278	2,387	164.6	4.8
ON	1,653	3,534	3,872	134.2	9.6
MAN	1,415	2,724	2,940	107.8	8.0
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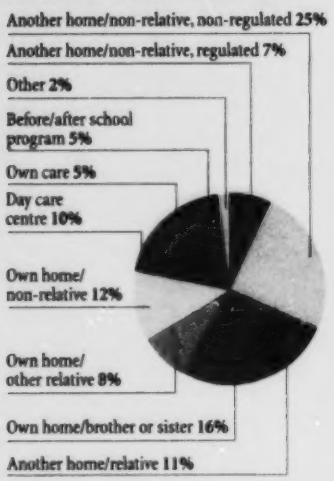

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Public education system buffeted by change

The 1990s marked a period of insecurity and change in education in Canada. A 1999 Angus Reid poll found that about 40% of parents were not satisfied with the quality of education their children were receiving. A 1998 Ontario study found that parents ranked education as their greatest concern in relation to their children. Fully one-third of parents said they would transfer their children from the public to the private school system if they could.

At the same time as parents were worrying about the school system's ability to provide their children with the basics, governments were cutting costs and rationalizing services as part of a larger trend to eliminate public deficits and reduce debt.

Between 1991 and 1996, the total number of children and youth attending pre-elementary, elementary and secondary schools increased by about 4% to 5.4 million; the number attending pre-elementary school increased by about 4% to 508,000. Between 1992 and 1996, the Canadian educator/pupil ratio rose from about 16 to 17 students per educator, with the average rising most in Ontario – from 15 to nearly 18 students per educator.

Although public spending on education rose by about 3% between 1992 and 1996, it fell as a proportion of gross national product, from 8% to 7.4%. For the first time ever, school boards reported a decrease in their expenditures between 1995 and 1996 (the latest figures available), although this varied by region. Budgets were cut in Ontario, Quebec and the Atlantic regions, but increased by about 3% in the western provinces. Average annual costs per student in Canada dropped by 5% between 1991 and 1996 – from $7,200 to $6,840 in constant 1996 dollars.

At the beginning of the new millennium, the trends in education continue to be towards a more sophisticated curriculum, but with fewer dollars. In several provinces, school boards are in the process of closing smaller community schools and moving students into existing larger facilities to save money. Teachers are being asked to deliver new and more comprehensive courses, but often with less money to buy teaching aids.

Post-secondary education

While the number of full-time university students increased slightly (1%), and the number of full-time community college students grew by about 9% between 1992/93 and 1997/98, the number of part-time students fell. Among university students, part-time enrolment declined by 21% and among community college students, by 13%. Research suggests that cutbacks in funding may be a major factor in the substantial decline in the number of part-time students. Universities appear to be concentrating their resources on full-time students, and as a result, fewer part-time courses are being offered.

EXPENDITURES ON EDUCATION, 1985 TO 1995

	Expenditures (Millions $)	As % of GDP	$ per capita
1985	34,564.1	7.2	1,332
1986	37,074.5	7.3	1,415
1987	38,421.6	7.0	1,447
1988	41,959.0	6.9	1,560
1989	44,531.7	6.8	1,626
1990	48,679.6	7.3	1,752
1991	53,144.3	7.9	1,890
1992	55,800.5	8.0	1,956
1993	57,056.3	7.9	1,975
1994	58,560.0	7.7	2,002
1995	58,943.7	7.4	1,990

Source: Statistics Canada, Education in Canada, 1998.

Enrolment in full-time studies increased at universities in five provinces between 1992/93 and 1997/98. The largest increase was in BC, where the number of full-time students grew by 16%. Full-time registrations also increased in Alberta, Manitoba, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan. However, enrolment in part-time courses rose only in Alberta (4%) and BC (9%). Universities in the other provinces incurred double-digit declines in part-time enrolment.

The proportion of young women aged 18 to 24 attending university or college full-time climbed slowly over the decade from 35% to 37%, while the proportion of young men remained steady at about 31%. ✹

Child welfare challenges increase

by Bruce Rivers

"Over the last five years, there has been a revolution across Canada in child welfare and child protection. Sadly, it is a revolution driven not by best practice or informed feedback from consumers and those who deliver the services, but rather by the deaths of children."

The number of children taken into the care of child welfare agencies rose in the 1990s as a result of heightened public awareness about the seriousness of child abuse and neglect, stronger legislation, and worsening conditions among the poor. In Ontario alone, there has been a 10% increase in the number of poor children coming into care over the last year.

On the positive side, child welfare agencies have developed new tools to assess children's risk, tools which help to objectify – but never simplify – the very critical decision of whether or not to remove a child from their family. In some provinces, government funds for child protection services have been increased after a decade of erosion. At least in part, this is because of heightened awareness following media scrutiny of recent public inquiries.

There is also an increased understanding that those who work with children's welfare programs need training, and retraining, to carry out their very difficult work. In some agencies, staff turnover has caused a lack of continuity in the relationships with children and families – relationships that are fundamental to the work of child welfare.

A few decades ago, child welfare laws in many provinces were amended to preserve the primacy of the family; now, laws are being changed to place primacy on the child's safety above all other considerations, including familial ties. The legal definition of child neglect has also been clarified and the amount of time that children can remain in "litigation limbo" has been reduced – a factor which contributed to some children's deaths.

There is also growing recognition of the value of empowering youth and giving them a voice, which has lead to the development of new programs in some agencies. And perhaps most encouragingly, a number of provinces are beginning to recognize the importance of increasing their investments in intervention programs to support healthy early child development with a view to breaking the cycle of abuse and neglect. ●

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Demand for child welfare services continues to grow

CCSD's survey of provincial child welfare departments revealed the following overall trends among the seven provinces that participated:

- Six of the seven provinces showed increases in the number of children and youth in care between 1994/95 and 1998/99; in one province, the number remained unchanged.
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- The number of child protection reports received by welfare authorities between 1994/95 and 1998/99 increased in three of the provinces surveyed. Child protection reports grew by almost 14% in BC and by over 12% in Nova Scotia; New Brunswick received almost 3% more reports in 1998/99. In Alberta, the number of reports dropped and in Manitoba the number remained almost unchanged.
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- Only three provinces provided data on the number of child protection workers and in each case, the numbers increased between 1994/95 and 1998/99. In BC, the number of child welfare staff grew by 107%, while Saskatchewan had over 22% more workers. Between 1995/96 and 1998/99, staff numbers in Nova Scotia increased by 38%.
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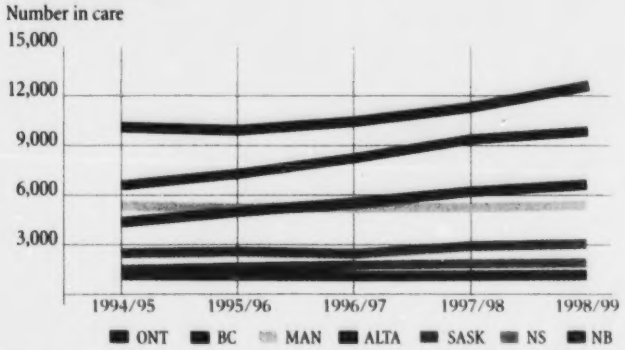

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Service providers have difficulty aiding immigrant kids

Despite efforts to reduce barriers, the needs of immigrant children and youth for health, education and social services are not being met adequately, according to a 1999 survey of service providers in major urban areas. The CCSD surveyed 88 agencies across Canada, including boards of education, health care providers, welfare and social service agencies, community-based agencies, and police departments that provide services for children and youth who have immigrated to Canada within the last five years.

More than three-quarters of the agencies stated that immigrant children and families face barriers in accessing their services. The most common barrier was language, with problems such as a lack of staff who could speak the children's languages, insufficient access to interpreters, and too few written materials in the various languages.

Service providers also noted that immigrant families often don't know about existing services nor how to use them. The families may also have fears or misunderstandings about Canadian services. And service providers don't always understand the families' lives or their experiences.

Almost all of the organizations surveyed have tried to reduce these barriers. All but 3% provide services in languages other than English and French. About three-quarters have specific initiatives for immigrant families, including diversity training for agency staff and recruiting staff from different cultural backgrounds.

Most organizations, however, reported that they do not have the resources needed to adequately serve new immigrants, and recent financial cutbacks have made the situation worse. Nearly half say their financial resources have decreased and over one-third say their human resources have decreased in the past five years. Reductions in financial and human resources were most frequently reported by boards of education and police departments. ●

Child welfare challenges increase

by Bruce Rivers

"Over the last five years, there has been a revolution across Canada in child welfare and child protection. Sadly, it is a revolution driven not by best practice or informed feedback from consumers and those who deliver the services, but rather by the deaths of children."

The number of children taken into the care of child welfare agencies rose in the 1990s as a result of heightened public awareness about the seriousness of child abuse and neglect, stronger legislation, and worsening conditions among the poor. In Ontario alone, there has been a 10% increase in the number of poor children coming into care over the last year.

On the positive side, child welfare agencies have developed new tools to assess children's risk, tools which help to objectify – but never simplify – the very critical decision of whether or not to remove a child from their family. In some provinces, government funds for child protection services have been increased after a decade of erosion. At least in part, this is because of heightened awareness following media scrutiny of recent public inquiries.

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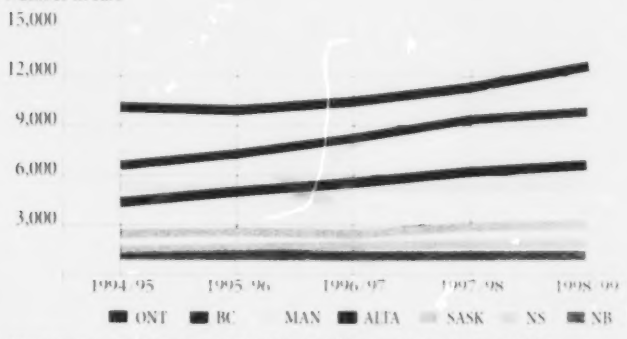

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Creating support for urban Aboriginal youth

"The majority of Aboriginal people live in urban areas and that's where a lot of the issues are being tackled. With the Urban Multipurpose Aboriginal Youth Centres coming into place now, I think there's reason for optimism."

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Social Planning Council of Winnipeg

Aboriginal youth are among the most disadvantaged groups in urban Canada. Many feel disenfranchised from mainstream institutions, they have difficulties in school and finding work, and they often experience troubles both inside and outside the home. More than half the Aboriginal youth in urban areas lived in poverty in 1995. And this population is growing, creating even greater pressures to improve their living conditions.

To address these young people's needs, the Aboriginal Youth Council of the National Association of Friendship Centres has been involved in the Urban Multipurpose Aboriginal Youth Centre Initiative and participated fully in the establishment of 54 new centres across Canada. The centres, which began receiving funding from the Department of Canadian Heritage in 1999, offer programs and activities developed by the local Aboriginal community to meet their specific needs, with strong input from their Aboriginal youth.

ABORIGINAL YOUTH RANK PROGRAMS AS HIGH PRIORITY

	%
Employment opportunities	64
Sports and recreation	64
Career planning	63
Cultural supports	60
Health promotion	57
Social supports	54
Community-based services	49
Anti-gang support	29
Conflict resolution	25

Note: 1,177 urban Aboriginal youth were surveyed. The average age of respondents was 17.6 years.

Source: Urban Multipurpose Aboriginal Youth Centres, Draft consultation survey results, February 1998.

The centres were developed after a national survey of over 2,000 Aboriginal youth living off-reserve found that more than half the youth were not involved in any programs. Common reasons cited were that the youth did not know about any programs, they weren't interested in those that existed, or they lacked the resources to participate. Respondents ranked the greatest needs as being more employment opportunities, sports and recreational facilities, career planning supports, and cultural supports.

In response, the new youth centres offer courses to increase skill development, career counselling and training; improve self-esteem and life skills through parenting supports; and health, cultural and recreational programs. The intent is to provide healthy alternatives to negative and destructive social behaviours such as criminal activities, joining gangs, and abusing alcohol or drugs. ✹

More information about these centres is available from Kevin Hill at the National Association of Friendship Centres, umayckevinh@nafc-aboriginal.com or by calling (613) 563-4844, ext. 33.

Homelessness among children rising

Children and youth are among the fastest-growing segments of the homeless population in Canada and the results are devastating for their development. According to a 1998 Toronto study, children living in overcrowded hostels experience fatigue and stress that cause problems concentrating at school and completing homework, and reduce their chances of developing friendships. Other studies show that homeless children are at increased risk of undernourishment and developmental delays, and they have lower visual and motor skills than other children.

While comprehensive national data on homelessness among children and youth is not available, the following statistics paint a disturbing picture:

- **In Toronto, the number of families admitted to hostels increased by 76% between 1988 and 1996. More than 5,000 children were homeless in 1996. There are over 100,000 people – including over 31,000 children – on waiting lists for social housing. At the current placement rate, families may be waiting 17 years to obtain housing.**
- **Over 9,000 children and youth under age 30 used Montreal's shelters, soup kitchens or drop-in centres for the homeless in 1996.**
- **About 900 children under age 18 used services for the homeless in Quebec City in 1996, as did more than 3,000 young people aged 18 to 29.**
- **More than 900 children stayed with their parents in shelters in Ottawa in 1998, representing almost one-fifth of all shelter users. In the Ottawa region, there are about**

Food bank use continues to rise

- In March 1999, more than 320,000 Canadian children under age18 used food banks – an increase of 8% over 1998.
- More than 40% of all food bank recipients are children and youth under 18, although they make up only 25% of the population.
- More than 12% of food banks reported that they could not meet the needs in their communities.
- In March 1999, on average, one in every 38 Canadians went to a food bank.

Housing needs grow

A growing number of Canadian families are having trouble finding appropriate, affordable housing or they are at risk of losing their shelter. This, in turn, contributes to the rising number of homeless children using food banks. Between 1991 and 1996, the percentage of renters in "core housing need" increased in all provinces but two. Overall, the number of renters in core need increased by close to one-third, from 849,000 to 1,151,000 over this period.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation identifies a family as being in core housing need if there are one or more of the following conditions: their accommodation lacks full bathroom facilities or is in need of major repairs; is too small for the size and composition of the family; or if the shelter costs are 30% or more of the household income.

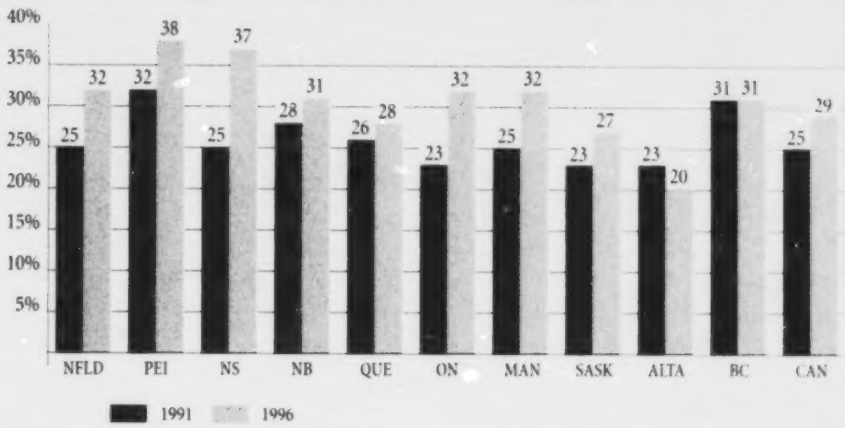
In 1996, about 94% of the renters who were in core housing need spent 30% or more of their income on shelter. Between 1991 and 1996, the percentage of couples with children spending at least one-third of their income on rent increased from 22% to 30%, and among lone-parent families, the proportion rose from 51% to 58%.

Although the overall percentage of families living in dwellings that were in need of major repairs remained stable between 1991 and 1996 (at about 8%), poor families made up a larger proportion of this group. In 1996, about 12% of poor couples with kids under 18 and 14% of poor lone parents with children under 18 lived in housing that needed major repairs. ✹

15,000 households waiting for social housing. The average wait is five to seven years.

- In Calgary, the number of families using homeless shelters grew by 50% between 1994 and 1998. A one-day count in May 1998 found nearly 200 children and youth under age 25 without homes.
- In Edmonton in March 1999, about 200 children and youth under age 19 were homeless, representing nearly one in every four homeless people in that city. ✹

RENTERS IN CORE HOUSING NEED, CANADA & THE PROVINCES, 1991 & 1996



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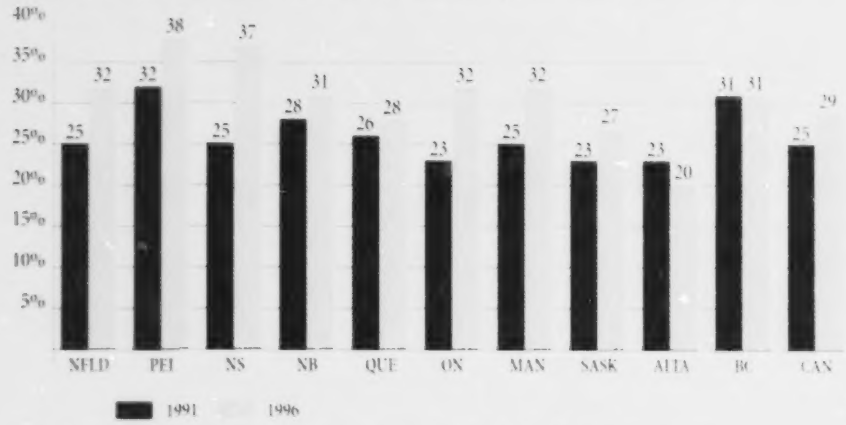

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Recreation crucial to child development

"Children probably spend more time in the average week in leisure, play and recreation than they do in school. Yet we marginalize it. Many people do not understand the importance of quality play, whether it's provided by a government agency, with the family, or just on the street. Access to quality recreational activities for all children is preventative public health."

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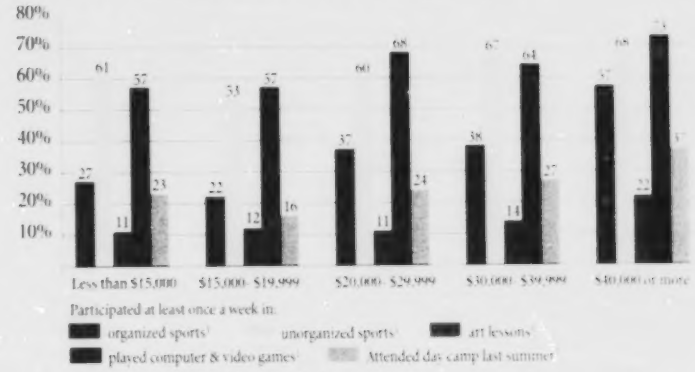
Recreation provides children and youth with the opportunity to develop skills and build their sense of self. When young people participate in sports, cultural programs and other recreational activities, they have better emotional health and they perform better academically.

CHILDREN'S RECREATION, BY FAMILY INCOME, 1996



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Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the NLSCY, 1996.

Progress uses NLSCY data as one source to monitor children's participation in recreational activities. Changes between 1994 and 1996 show mixed results: children are participating less in sports and art lessons; their participation in clubs or community groups and computer/video games has stayed relatively stable; and participation has increased in summer camps.

Poor children continue to lack access to recreational activities. Regardless of the type of activity, children in the lowest-income families participate less than children in the highest-income families.

While it appears that overall participation in video/computer games and summer camps has remained stable or increased, access to both of these activities has decreased for children from the lowest-income households. ✷

Children's use of health care professionals

Between 1993 and 1996, total health care spending increased slightly: spending in the hospital sector declined, while spending in the public health sector increased. The proportion of children under age 12 who visited a family doctor or paediatrician dropped slightly between 1994 and 1996, but the proportion who were seen by a public health nurse or nurse practitioner increased.

Reliance on public health nurses and nurse practitioners to provide frontline care to children varies widely by province. More than 40% of children under age 12 in the less populated, more rural provinces of PEI and Saskatchewan were seen by these health care providers in 1996, compared to only 10% of children in Ontario, about one-third in Alberta, BC and Newfoundland, and one-quarter of children in Quebec and Manitoba.

While the rates of visits to doctors and nurses do not vary greatly between children in lower-income and higher-income families, rates of dental care do. Only about half of children in families with incomes below $30,000 saw a dentist in 1996, but about 60% of children in families with incomes between $30,000 and $39,999, and 70% of those in families with incomes of $40,000 or more visited a dentist that year.

- In 1997, there was one doctor for every 109 children under age 15 in Canada, a ratio that has been stable since 1993. There was one family doctor for every 213 children, a ratio that has grown from 203 since 1993.
- In 1997, there was one registered nurse for every 26 children under age 15, up from one for every 25 children in 1993.
- Children under 15 make up approximately 20% of the population in Canada and they account for only 9.6% of all health care expenditures. ✷

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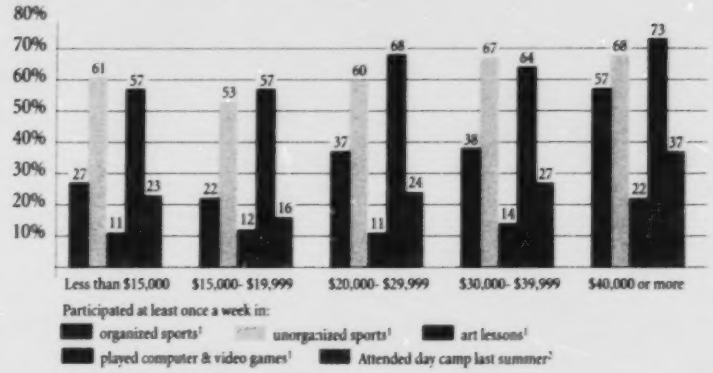

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- In 1997, there was one doctor for every 109 children under age 15 in Canada, a ratio that has been stable since 1993. There was one family doctor for every 213 children, a ratio that has grown from 203 since 1993.
- In 1997, there was one registered nurse for every 26 children under age 15, up from one for every 25 children in 1993.
- Children under 15 make up approximately 20% of the population in Canada and they account for only 9.6% of all health care expenditures. ●

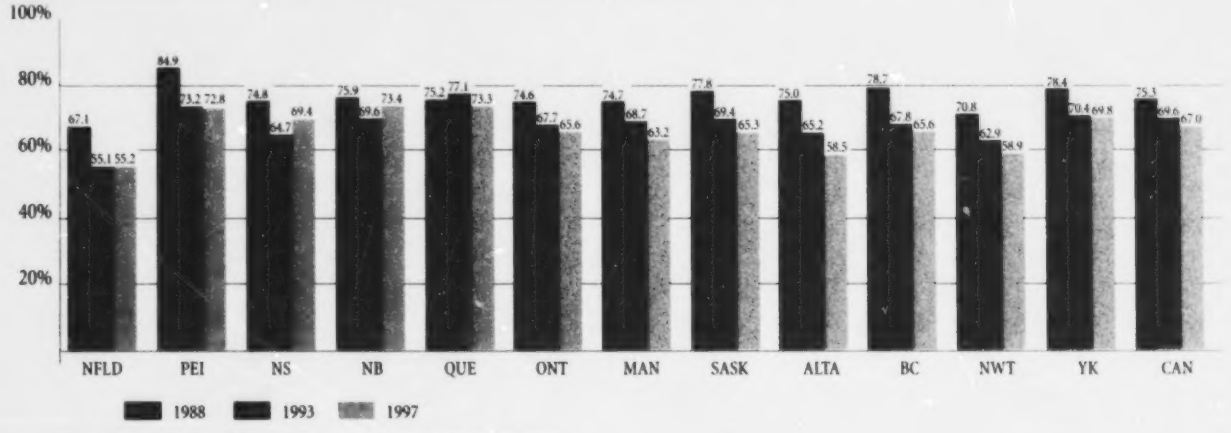
Civic vitality trends reflect economic concerns

For children and youth, civic vitality means that there are people beyond their own family members who contribute to their well-being. They provide young people with opportunities to grow and develop to their full potential, they invite them to participate in local initiatives, and they advocate on their behalf through organizations such as the Scouts, and Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada.

As a way of measuring the extent to which Canadians participate in civic life, *Progress* tracks three indicators: charitable donations, participation in volunteer activities, and participation in elections. The first is an indicator of how much support Canadians give to those beyond their immediate family. The second indicates how actively Canadians contribute to community activities, and the third indicates how connected Canadians feel to civic life through government.

The following trends suggest that Canadians' participation in civic life is affected by the economy. As reported in the Canadian Council on Social Development's 1999 publication, *Personal Security Index*, Canadians' incomes stagnated and their worries about economic well-being grew over the last decade, with real gains in income occuring only after 1998.

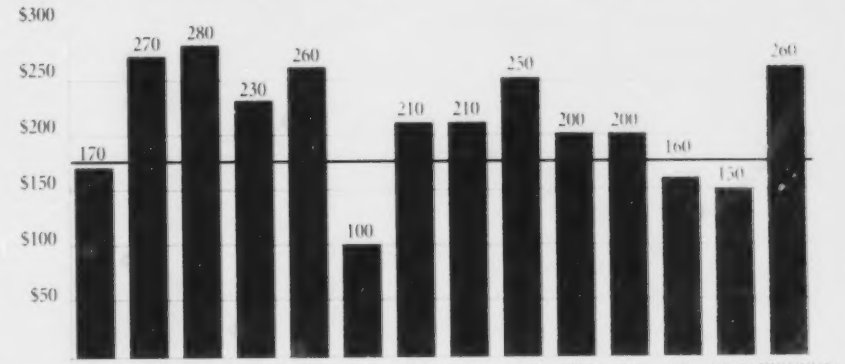
VOTER TURNOUT IN FEDERAL ELECTIONS, CANADA & THE PROVINCES



Source: Elections Canada website: www.elections.ca/election/results/res_table04_e.html

- After falling in 1997, the number of Canadians giving money to charity rose in 1998 to levels similar to what they had been throughout the decade. The median Canadian donation remained constant at $170, with provincial medians ranging from a high of $280 in PEI to a low of $100 in Quebec.
- A slightly lower proportion of Canadians participated in voluntary organizations. In 1996, 29% of adults over age 20 participated in voluntary organizations, down from 32% in 1994. However, those who volunteer are donating more time – 43% volunteered at least once a week in 1996, compared to 38% in 1994.
- The proportion of Canadians voting in federal elections declined in every province over the 1990s. ✵

CHARITABLE DONATIONS, CANADA & THE PROVINCES, 1998 Median donations



	CAN	NFLD	PEI	NS	NB	QUE	ONT	MAN	SASK	ALTA	BC	YK	NWT*	NUNAVUT*
Median income $	36,600	28,600	29,500	33,200	31,500	35,100	39,100	32,600	31,600	37,600	37,100	47,200	56,900	50,800

** Data for the NWT and Nunavut are based on current territorial boundaries created when Nunavut officially became a territory in April 1999.*
Note: Only donations to approved organizations for which official tax receipts were issued were considered deductions. Because it is possible to carry forward donations for up to 5 years, the data may contain donations made earlier and only claimed in 1998. Also, taxfilers can combine charitable donations with their spouse's to get the maximum benefit. The number of individuals who give to charity may be higher than those that report donations.
Source: Statistics Canada, "Charitable Donors, 1998," in The Daily, Nov. 25, 1999.

Connecting youth across Canada

"It's time young people had an opportunity to advocate on their own behalf, to speak and be listened to, to have a real voice." Michelle Yu, Coordinator of Networking Youth Nationally

Where can young people find peers with whom they can talk about important life issues like mental health and well-being? Where can they find the resources and supports they need to deal with these issues? How can young people connect with one another across Canada or within their own communities?

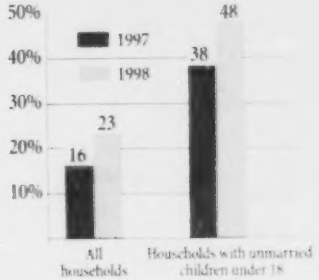
The Internet is fast becoming a daily tool for a growing number of Canadian households. For some, it is the basis of building community supports. Recognizing this, a new national bilingual program has been launched with support from Health Canada. Networking Youth Nationally (NYN) wants to make it a little easier for Canada's young people to connect with and talk to others about the daily pressures of growing up.

The Network's website provides a safe place for youth to chat, vent, and exchange their personal stories about "serious life stuff" like suicide and depression, or the daily stresses of relationships, schools and jobs. By providing a national database, chatline, e-mail, and hot links, the Network enables young people to talk openly with each other and to spread the word about activities that work in communities across the country. It also gives youth a chance to speak with people who care about and work with youth, such as health professionals and community workers.

"This Network is not about re-inventing the wheel, it's about building on initiatives that are taking place around the country. NYN is all about supporting youth – what youth are thinking and feeling," says Yu.

The Network is designed and run by youth for youth. It seeks to decrease the stigma of talking about mental health and well-being and encourages youth to participate in problem-solving and decision-making on mental health issues.

HOUSEHOLDS USING THE INTERNET FROM HOME, 1997 & 1998



Source: Statistics Canada, "Internet use by households," in The Daily, July 13, 1999.

In 2000, NYN will travel to 13 communities across Canada to facilitate youth fairs. Each "YouthQuake!" fair will involve two days of learning and networking, and each will be tailored to the specific needs of the community. Workshops will cover issues ranging from computers and employment to health and community development. To find out more about YouthQuake! or NYN, check out their website at **www.nyn.on.ca/**. ✵

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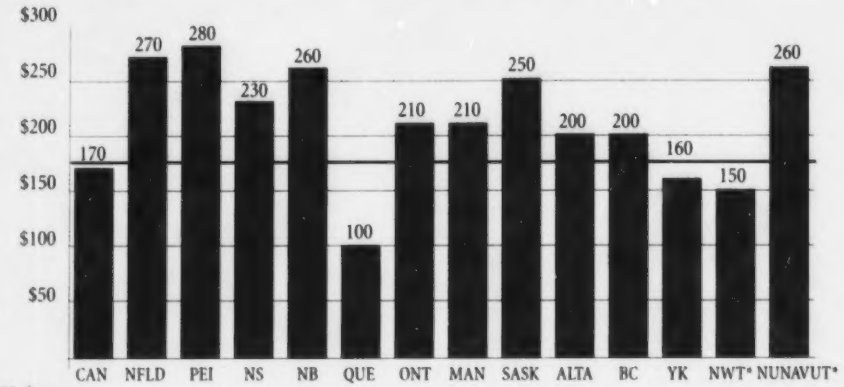

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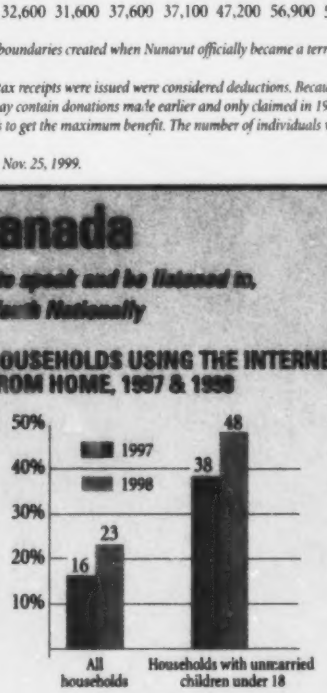

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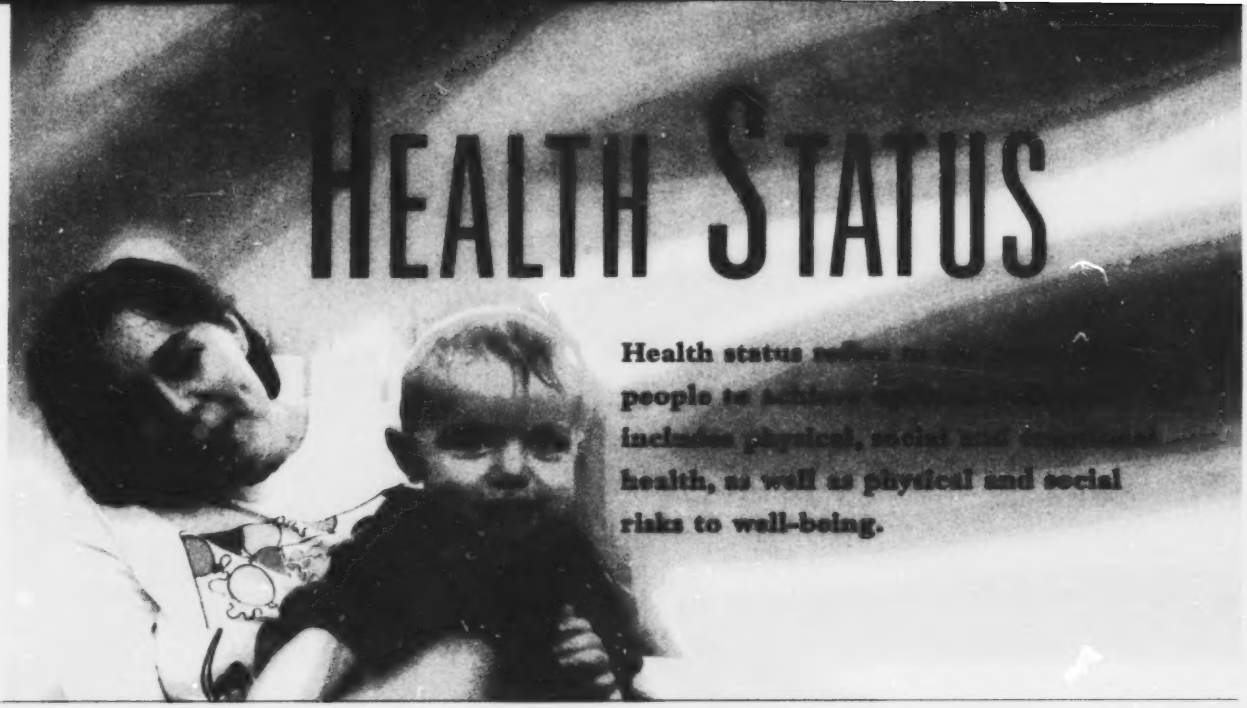
How children and youth are faring

The healthy development of young Canadians depends on many important factors, including strong and loving families, safe neighbourhoods, and secure family incomes. These factors determine how children and youth develop. Together, they shape the unique mix of opportunities and challenges that children face as they progress towards adulthood.

What are the results of Canada's efforts on behalf of children and youth? *The Progress of Canada's Children* looks at four indicators of young people's progress – their health status, social engagement, learning, and the labour force profile of youth. These indicators allow us to measure changes in how children and youth are faring over time. This year, we report on changes – both positive and negative – that have occurred since 1994, the baseline year for this project.



HEALTH STATUS

Health status ... people to ... including physical, social ... health, as well as physical and social risks to well-being.

Death and injury rates are dropping

Compared to children and youth in many other parts of the world, Canada's young people enjoy remarkably good health. In Canada, injuries and cancers – rather than infectious diseases or wars – are the leading causes of death for this age group, and since the 1960s, we have made dramatic progress in lowering childhood deaths due to both injuries and cancer. However, the rates of improvement in each area have slowed in the 1990s. It is also worrisome that death rates continue to be significantly higher for boys than for girls, particularly among those aged 15 to 24.

In 1997, injuries accounted for 62% of all fatalities among children and youth aged 1 to 24, and they are the leading cause of death for this group. As children get older, injuries cause proportionately more deaths: about one-third of the deaths of preschoolers are the result of injuries, compared to more than three-quarters of deaths among young men and 55% among young women aged 20 to 24.

Injury death rates declined somewhat over the 1990s, but there are still too many injuries. Data from the 1996 NLSCY indicate that over 550,000 children under age 14 had at least one injury in the previous year, representing 10% of all children in this age group. Twenty-five per cent of those injuries involved a broken bone.

Cancer rates steady

While there have been significant improvements in treating childhood cancers over the last few decades, cancer is still the second leading cause of death among children aged 0 to 14 – causing 189 deaths in 1996. With improvements in treatments, the cancer mortality rate among young people declined from 7 deaths per 100,000 children in 1971, to 3 deaths per 100,000 by 1996. According to the available data, survival rates for Canadian children with cancer have improved significantly – more than two-thirds of children diagnosed with cancer are likely to survive for at least 10 years. However, the incidence of cancer did not drop between 1984 and 1996: each year, over 800 children under age 14 develop cancer.

MORTALITY RATES BY AGE GROUP, 1990 & 1997

Rate per 100,000

	1990		1997	
Age group	Male	Female	Male	Female
1 to 4 yrs	43	32	31	27
5 to 9 yrs	24	18	17	14
10 to 14 yrs	27	18	24	16
15 to 19 yrs	95	33	79	34
20 to 24 yrs	120	40	95	32

Sources: Statistics Canada, Leading Causes of Death at Different Ages, Canada, 1997; *and Canadian Institute of Child Health,* The Health of Canada's Children, *1994.*

Respiratory ailments of concern

The proportion of children suffering from respiratory illness appears to be growing. According to the NLSCY, in 1996, 71% of three-year-olds were reported by their parents to have had at least one ear infection since they were born, up from 67% in 1994. More than half of these children had had three or more ear

infections. Thirteen per cent of children under age 13 were reported to have had asthma. Respiratory illness is one of the main reasons for children's hospital admissions in Canada. It is cited as the cause of 43% of the hospital admissions for children aged 1 to 4, one-third of the admissions among those aged 5 to 9, and one-fifth for children aged 10 to 14. ✹

INJURIES AS A PER CENT OF ALL DEATHS, BY AGE GROUP, 1997

Age group	Male	Female
1 to 4 yrs	34	30
5 to 9 yrs	45	36
10 to 14 yrs	59	41
15 to 19 yrs	75	66
20 to 24 yrs	76	55

Source: Statistics Canada, Leading Causes of Death at Different Ages, Canada, 1997.

Infant deaths falling, but still room for improvement

Canada's infant mortality rate – one of the most commonly used measures of health and well-being – has come down significantly since the early 1960s, and the rate has continued to decline slightly over the 1990s. This is an important indicator of our progress in improving maternal health and care for newborn children.

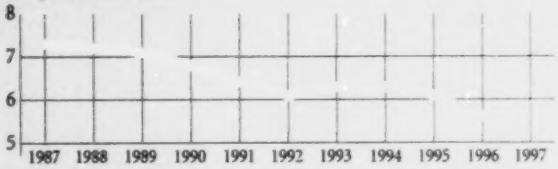
Despite this, there are some concerns. Even though Canada's infant mortality rate is well below those in the United States and New Zealand, it is still 40% higher than the rates in Japan, Finland, Norway and Sweden. Also, the rates in Canada vary dramatically among the provinces and territories – indicating that we are far less successful at preventing infant deaths in some regions than in others.

The infant mortality rates of nearly 11 deaths per 1,000 live births in the Northwest Territories, 8 per 1,000 in the Yukon and nearly 9 per 1,000 in Saskatchewan – higher than even those in the US – are likely related to the proportionately larger number of Aboriginal children born in those areas. Sadly, their overall health continues to be far poorer than the health of other Canadian children.

There are also concerns that preterm births – babies born before 37 weeks gestation – are increasing in Canada. This causes at least three-quarters of all stillbirths and deaths of infants under 7 days old. Preterm births rose from 6.8% to 7.1% of all live births in Canada between 1981 and 1996. Experts believe that the increase in rate is due to a rise in the number of multiple pregnancies and obstetric interventions, among other factors. ✹

MORTALITY RATES OF INFANTS UNDER 1 YEAR OF AGE, CANADA, 1987-1997

Rate per 1,000 live births



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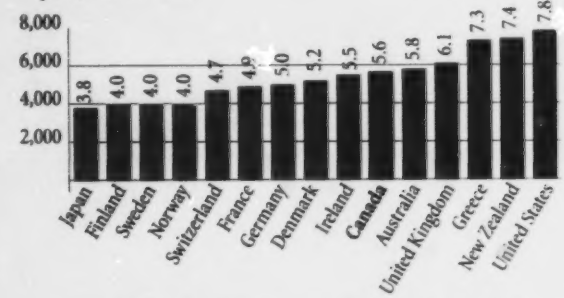

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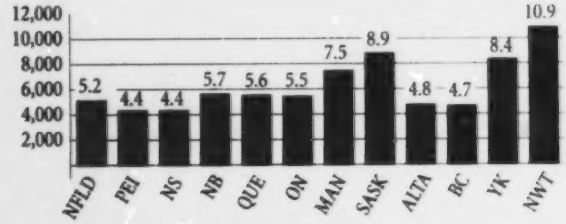

Source: Statistics Canada, "Births, 1997," in The Daily, *June 16, 1999.*

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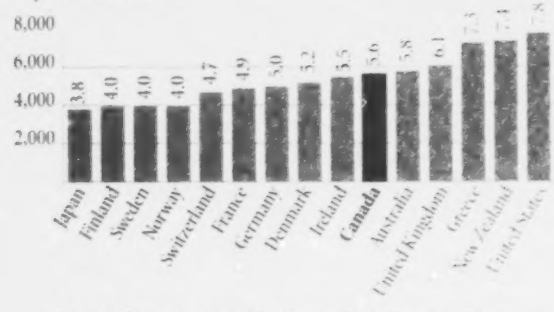

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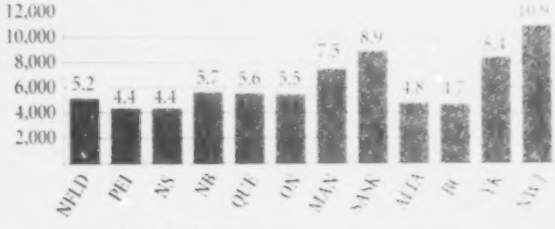


Source: Statistics Canada, "Births, 1997," in The Daily, June 19, 1999.

More babies enjoy mothers' milk

Most health experts consider breast milk to be the best nutrition babies can have, and it is becoming a more common food source for Canadian babies. According to the 1996 NLSCY, more than 75% of children under age 2 had been breastfed, up from 69% in 1994.

Breastfeeding rates vary dramatically by province – from a high of 90% of children in Alberta to a low of under 60% in Newfoundland and Quebec – but the rates in all provinces rose between 1994 and 1996.

Some mothers are more likely than others to breastfeed their infants. Mothers from higher-income households and those with higher levels of education are the most likely to breastfeed their children. Between 1994 and 1996, the proportion of mothers who breastfed increased at all income levels, but higher-income mothers were still more likely to breastfeed their babies than were low-income mothers.

It is also encouraging that the number of mothers who breastfeed their babies for at least six months is growing, because the Breastfeeding Committee for Canada considers six months to be the minimum optimal length of time. In 1996, almost two-thirds of mothers who breastfed their babies stopped nursing within six months after the birth, down from over three-quarters in 1994. And in 1996, only 31% of mothers breastfed for two months or less, down from 41% in 1994.

BREASTFEEDING, BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME, 1994 & 1996

Household income	1994	1996
Under $20,000	63%	67%
$20,000 - $29,999	61%	75%
$30,000 - $39,999	65%	77%
$40,000+	74%	80%

Note: Children under age 2 who were ever breastfed.

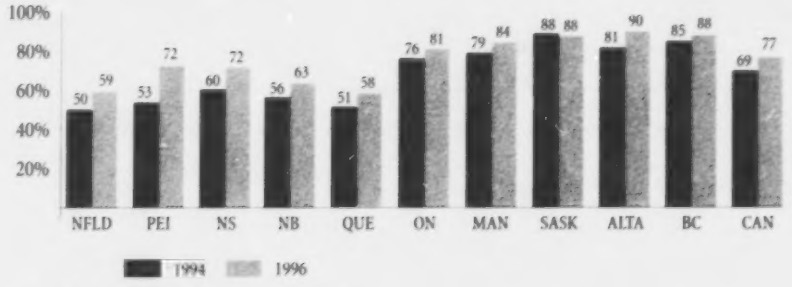
The most frequent reasons given for stopping breastfeeding were that the mothers did not have enough milk, they were returning to work or school, they planned to stop, or were weaning the baby. It is a positive sign that the rate of mothers who thought they did not have enough milk dropped by about 5 points between 1994 and 1996. This suggests that more mothers are feeling confident about their ability to successfully nurse their babies. ✹

REASONS FOR STOPPING BREASTFEEDING, 1994 & 1996

	1994	1996
Not enough milk	26.7%	21.7%
Work/school	17.6%	17.1%
Planned	15.6%	18.0%
Weaned	12.4%	17.5%
Inconvenient	12.3%	9.4%
Other	10.5%	10.1%
Sore nipples/ engorgement	6.8%	4.7%
Difficulty	5.6%	4.3%
Mother ill*	3.7%	3.9%
Preferred formula*	2.0%	1.6%
Doctor's advice*	2.0%	1.5%

**Estimates less reliable due to small sample size.*
Note: Children under age 2 who were ever breastfed and stopped.

BREASTFEEDING RATES, BY PROVINCE, 1994 & 1996



Note: Children under age 2 who were ever breastfed.
Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the NLSCY, 1994 and 1996.

Asthma rates continue to rise

According to Canadian surveys, reported rates of asthma among children and youth under age 20 jumped from 2% to over 12% between 1978 and 1996. About 14% of teens aged 15 to 19 in 1996 were reported to be asthma sufferers, compared to about 8% of children under age 4. Boys under age 15 were more likely than girls to have asthma, but by age 15, young women were more often sufferers.

Asthma – which causes wheezing and shortness of breath – can cause children to miss school and in the worse cases, to be admitted to hospital. One survey of students suffering from asthma found that 19% had visited a hospital emergency room in the previous year as a result of the condition.

Many acute asthmatic attacks in children are preventable. The survey found that more than half the students reported that tobacco smoke brought on their asthma or made it worse. Despite this, 48% said they were regularly exposed to second-hand tobacco smoke, most often in their own

Some immunization rates below targets

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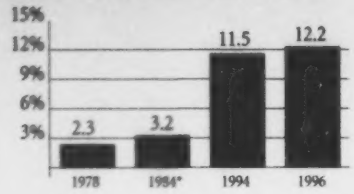
ASTHMA AMONG CANADIANS UNDER AGE 20, SELECTED YEARS



**Note: 1984 survey only included children up to age 14. Percentages are weighted estimates and are rounded to one decimal.*
Source: Health Canada, Measuring Up: A Health Surveillance Update on Canadian Children and Youth, *1999.*

YOUNG PEOPLE TALK ABOUT HEALTH

"[illegible] I [illegible] because [illegible] you [illegible] school [illegible] Montreal [illegible] worry [illegible] AIDS for [illegible] but a lot of my friends [illegible] around. About five years ago, there were three or four people in the high school who had AIDS. Nobody protects themselves."
(Deborah, 24, Ottawa)

"My doctor is always too busy to see me, so I usually end up going to the hospital the next day."
(Bob, 11, Moncton)

"You can ask doctors about contraception, STDs, and drugs, but it's always hard."
(Sarah, 12, Moncton)

"I wouldn't tell my doctor about my problems. I would tell my friends if it was something personal, and I might tell my mom, it depends."
(Trevor, 12, Ottawa)

More babies enjoy mothers' milk

Most health experts consider breast milk to be the best nutrition babies can have, and it is becoming a more common food source for Canadian babies. According to the 1996 NLSCY, more than 75% of children under age 2 had been breastfed, up from 69% in 1994.

Breastfeeding rates vary dramatically by province – from a high of 90% of children in Alberta to a low of under 60% in Newfoundland and Quebec – but the rates in all provinces rose between 1994 and 1996.

Some mothers are more likely than others to breastfeed their infants. Mothers from higher-income households and those with higher levels of education are the most likely to breastfeed their children. Between 1994 and 1996, the proportion of mothers who breastfed increased at all income levels, but higher-income mothers were still more likely to breastfeed their babies than were low-income mothers.

It is also encouraging that the number of mothers who breastfeed their babies for at least six months is growing, because the Breastfeeding Committee for Canada considers six months to be the minimum optimal length of time. In 1996, almost two-thirds of mothers who breastfed their babies stopped nursing within six months after the birth, down from over three-quarters in 1994. And in 1996, only 31% of mothers breastfed for two months or less, down from 41% in 1994.

BREASTFEEDING, BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME, 1994 & 1996

Household income	1994	1996
Under $20,000	63%	67%
$20,000 - $29,999	61%	75%
$30,000 - $39,999	65%	77%
$40,000+	74%	80%

Note: Children under age 2 who were ever breastfed.

The most frequent reasons given for stopping breastfeeding were that the mothers did not have enough milk, they were returning to work or school, they planned to stop, or were weaning the baby. It is a positive sign that the rate of mothers who thought they did not have enough milk dropped by about 5 points between 1994 and 1996. This suggests that more mothers are feeling confident about their ability to successfully nurse their babies. ●

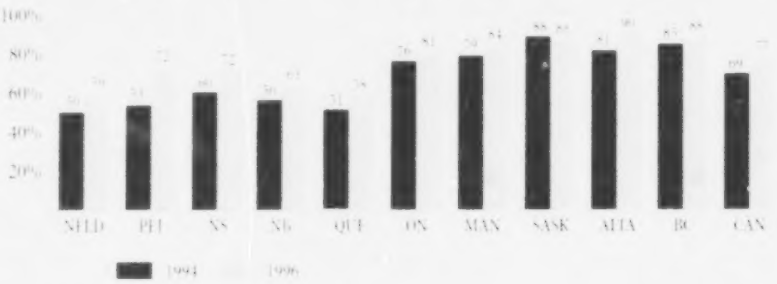
REASONS FOR STOPPING BREASTFEEDING, 1994 & 1996

	1994	1996
Not enough milk	26.7%	21.7%
Work/school	17.6%	17.1%
Planned	15.6%	18.0%
Weaned	12.4%	17.5%
Inconvenient	12.3%	9.4%
Other	10.5%	10.1%
Sore nipples/ engorgement	6.8%	4.7%
Difficulty	5.6%	4.3%
Mother ill*	3.7%	3.9%
Preferred formula*	2.0%	1.6%
Doctor's advice*	2.0%	1.5%

*Estimates are subject to high sampling error.

Note: Children under age 2 who were ever breastfed and stopped.

BREASTFEEDING RATES, BY PROVINCE, 1994 & 1996



Note: Children under age 2 who were ever breastfed.

Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the NLSCY, 1994 and 1996.

Asthma rates continue to rise

According to Canadian surveys, reported rates of asthma among children and youth under age 20 jumped from 2% to over 12% between 1978 and 1996. About 14% of teens aged 15 to 19 in 1996 were reported to be asthma sufferers, compared to about 8% of children under age 4. Boys under age 15 were more likely than girls to have asthma, but by age 15, young women were more often sufferers.

Asthma – which causes wheezing and shortness of breath – can cause children to miss school and in the worse cases, to be admitted to hospital. One survey of students suffering from asthma found that 19% had visited a hospital emergency room in the previous year as a result of the condition.

Many acute asthmatic attacks in children are preventable. The survey found that more than half the students reported that tobacco smoke brought on their asthma or made it worse. Despite this, 48% said they were regularly exposed to second-hand tobacco smoke, most often in their own

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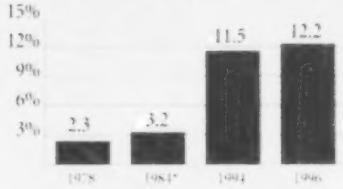

*Note: 1984 survey only included children up to age 14
Percentages are weighted estimates and are rounded to one decimal.
Source: Health Canada, Measuring Up: A Health Surveillance Update on Canadian Children and Youth, 1999

YOUNG PEOPLE TALK ABOUT HEALTH

"I go to a sexual health clinic and they explain everything, including things you don't even ask about."
(Jean, 15, Moncton)

"If I wanted information I would go to a clinic because they don't give you enough information at school."
(Cindy, 16, Montreal)

"I don't worry about STDs for myself but a lot of my friends sleep around. About five years ago, there were three or four people in the high school who had AIDS. Nobody protects themselves."
(Deborah, 24, Ottawa)

"My doctor is always too busy to see me, so I usually end up going to the hospital the next day."
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Smoking increases among teens

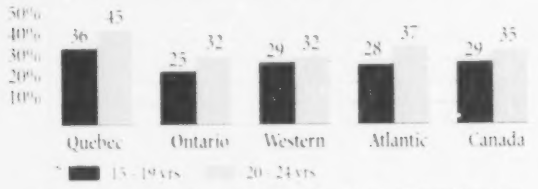
Tax cuts on tobacco products, stores willing to sell cigarettes to minors, and the marketing of tobacco products to young people have all contributed to the growing number of young smokers in Canada. In 1996/1997, an estimated 621,000 youth aged 15 to 19 smoked cigarettes – almost one-third of this age group. Young women were slightly more likely to smoke than young men – 31% compared to 27%. About 25% of youth aged 15 to 17 and 35% of youth aged 18 to 19 were current smokers. A further 663,000 young adults aged 20 to 24 were smokers, with young men being more frequent tobacco addicts than young women – 39% compared to 32%.

The prevalence of smoking among young people was highest in Quebec, where 36% of youth aged 15 to 19 and 45% of those aged 20 to 24 had the habit.

Since 1990, smoking among young women aged 15 to 19 has increased from 21% to 31%, and among young men it has risen from 22% to 27%. Overall, more than 329,000 Canadians aged 15 and older started smoking for the first time between 1994/95 and 1996/97 – and the vast majority were under the age of 25.

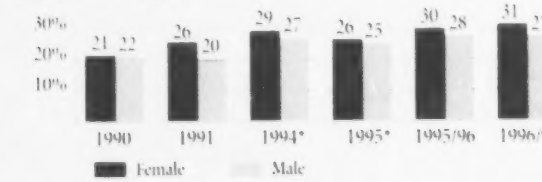
Smoking trends among youth vary between the regions where cigarette taxes were maintained at high levels in the 1990s and those where taxes were cut. Per capita consumption in the "high-tax" provinces dropped by 24% between 1990 and 1998, and in the "low-tax" provinces, it dropped by less than 8%. A 1998 Health Canada study also found that only 61% of retailers complied with the laws that prohibit tobacco sales to minors, down from 67% compliance in 1997. ✱

SMOKING AMONG YOUTH, BY REGION, 1996/97



Source: Health Canada, "Smoking Behaviour of Canadians" in National Population Health Survey Highlights, 1999.

CURRENT SMOKERS AGED 15 TO 19, BY GENDER, SELECTED YEARS



** November 1994 ** February 1995*

Source: Health Canada, "Smoking in Canada During the Past 16 Years" in Health Promotion Online's Monthly Magazine, January, 1999.

How do teens feel about themselves?

Recent research has found that Canadian youth differ in their capacity to cope with the stresses and strains of adolescence. According to the Survey of Health Behaviour in School-aged Children:

- In 1998, the proportion of youth who reported feeling "very happy" with their life declined sharply between Grades 6 and 10. By Grade 10, over one-third of the girls and one-fifth of the boys indicated that they felt depressed at least weekly, a slight decline from the proportions in 1994.
- Between 1990 and 1998, the number of youth with low scores on self-confidence tests declined slightly. However, girls continued to have much lower scores than boys on tests of self-confidence, decision-making and self-acceptance, and nearly twice as many girls as boys said that they often felt lonely.
- Girls are still far more likely than boys to say that they would like to change something about their body, particularly once they reach their mid-teens. By Grade 10, over 75% of girls and more than 50% of boys agreed with such a statement in 1998.

These concerns were corroborated in the 1996 National Population Health Survey. Having a high sense of self-esteem, a belief that life is meaningful and that challenges are manageable, and a feeling that life is under one's own control were lower, on average, among young people aged 12 to 19 than among older Canadians. ✱

INDICATORS OF POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH, BY AGE GROUP, 1994/95

Age group	Self-esteem	Has high sense of Coherence*	Mastery*
12 - 14 yrs	36	n/a	7
15 - 17 yrs	41	n/a	16
18 - 19 yrs	41	12	21
20 - 24 yrs	46	15	23
25 - 34 yrs	51	24	24
35 - 44 yrs	53	27	23
45 - 54 yrs	54	30	23
55 - 64 yrs	49	33	19
65 - 74 yrs	47	43	17
75 and older	44	39	16

**A sense of "coherence" is a view of the world that events are comprehensible, challenges are manageable, and life is meaningful. "Mastery" measures the extent to which individuals feel their life chances are under their own control.*

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Source: Health Canada, Statistical Report on the Health of Canadians, 1999.

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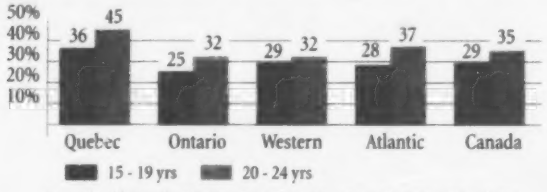

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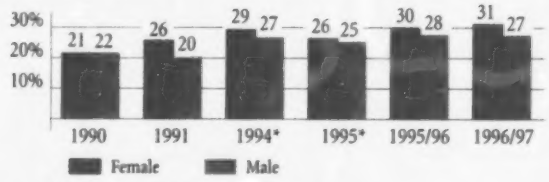

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Sexual health issues for youth

As reported last year in *Progress*, pregnancy rates among youth have risen in the 1990s. While rates of some sexually transmitted diseases (such as chlamydia) have been falling, the rate of infection for youth is still higher than for any other age group. Young women aged 15 to 19 have almost nine times the overall reported chlamydia rate. And there are other major concerns about the state of their sexual health.

HIV a growing concern

While the number of reported HIV infections among Canadian youth remained small in the 1990s, the median age of those becoming infected dropped dramatically – from age 32 in 1982 to age 23 by 1990. Particularly worrisome is the number of young people, many in their teens, who are now living with HIV. And according to a national survey, less than one-quarter of young people report having been tested for HIV, so there may be many more who are infected but are unaware of their HIV status.

By December 1998, more than 40,000 positive HIV tests had been reported to Health Canada. Of these, almost 11,000 were among young people aged 20 to 29, accounting for 28% of the total. Another 563 cases (or 1.5%) were adolescents aged 15 to 19, and 630 cases (or 1.6%) were children under age 15. For children, the main sources of infection were tainted blood products or from their mothers while still in utero.

HIV-POSITIVE YOUTH AGED 15 TO 19, BY EXPOSURE CATEGORY

as of December 31, 1998

Men having sex with men	40%
Heterosexual contact	24%
IV drug users	15%
Blood and blood products	6%
Men having sex with men/ IV drug users	6%

N = 563

Source: Laboratory Centre for Disease Control, Health Canada, "HIV and AIDS Among Adolescents in Canada," in HIV/AIDS Epi Update, *May 1999.*

By contrast, over 60% of the teens aged 15 to 19 contracted the virus as a result of men having sex with other men or through heterosexual contact.

Too many teens have unprotected sex

Medical professionals worry particularly about youth because a substantial proportion of young people report having sex without condoms – putting them at increased risk of contracting the HIV/AIDS virus or other sexually transmitted diseases. About half of sexually active women aged 15 to 19 and one-third of young men reported having sex without a condom in 1994. Among those aged 20 to 24, about the same proportion of women and nearly half the men reported having sex without condoms.

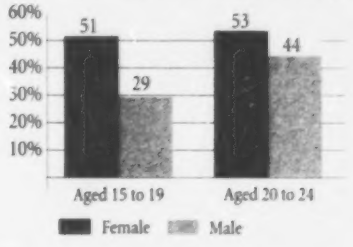
About 21% of sexually active males aged 20 to 24 reported that they had multiple sexual partners and had not used condoms in the last year, as did 17% of females aged 20 to 24. Those proportions were 21% for young women aged 15 to 19 and 15% for young men of that age.

Sexuality education waning

Another reason for concern about young people's sexual health is that education and prevention services in this area have declined, according to a 1999 survey by the Council of Ministers of Education. The survey found that curriculum time available in schools for sexuality education has been reduced as jurisdictions combined health education with career or physical education. The survey also found there were fewer direct public health nurse services in schools, thus reducing the quantity and quality of the preventive sexual health services available to adolescents. These trends likely contribute to unsafe sexual practices among youth, and they ignore the well-documented body of research indicating that *sustained, ongoing efforts* are necessary if sexuality education and adolescent sexual health services are to be effective. ✸

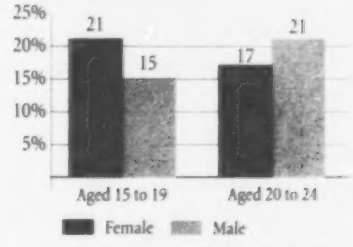
CONDOM USE AMONG SEXUALLY ACTIVE YOUTH, BY AGE GROUP AND GENDER, CANADA (EXCLUDING TERRITORIES), 1994/95

Never or sometimes used a condom in the last year



YOUTH SEXUALLY ACTIVE WITH AT LEAST TWO SEXUAL PARTNERS, BY AGE GROUP AND GENDER, CANADA (EXCLUDING TERRITORIES) 1994/95

Did not use condoms in the last year



Source: Health Canada, Toward a Healthy Future: Second Report on the Health of Canadians, *1999.*

Social Engagement

Social engagement refers to relationships or involvements – both positive and negative – with other family members, peers, community groups, local institutions, and at the broadest level, with society.

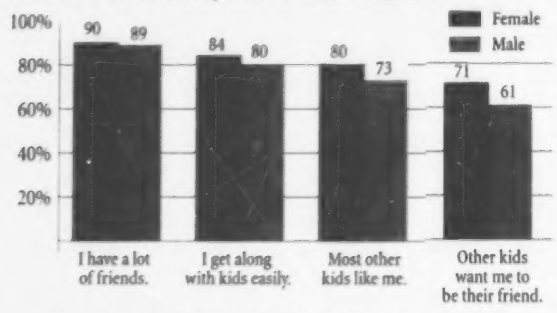
Friendships strengthen in early teen years

By the time children reach their early teens, their relationships with their peers grow in importance and they are moving towards independence from their parents. Having friends in whom they can confide and count on for support and with whom they can share good times contributes significantly to how confident young teens feel and how well they get along with their parents and at school. Research shows that young people who don't have good friendships are far more likely than other youth to manifest physical and mental health problems.

For the first time, NLSCY data are available about young Canadian teens' relationships. The data show that while most boys and girls aged 10 to 13 report having a lot of friends, fewer of the young teens are confident that they are well-regarded by their peers. Boys have less confidence about their standing with peers than do girls.

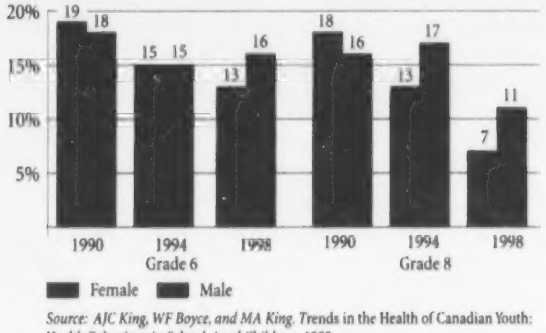
RELATIONSHIPS OF CHILDREN AGED 10 TO 13, 1996

Answered "True" or "Mostly True" to these statements:



Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the NLSCY, 1996.

STUDENTS WITH FEWER THAN TWO CLOSE FRIENDS



Source: AJC King, WF Boyce, and MA King. Trends in the Health of Canadian Youth: Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children, 1999.

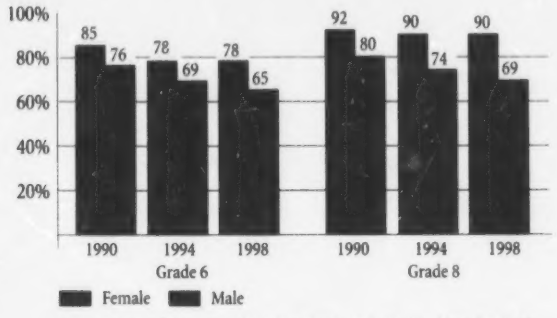
It is encouraging that data from the Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children study show that the proportion of children in Grades 6 and 8 who have fewer than two close friends dropped between 1990 and 1998, especially among Grade 8 girls. In 1990, nearly one in five girls of this age reported having fewer than two close friends, but by 1998, the proportion was only one in 14.

Nearly all girls of this age say that it is easy to talk to their same-sex friends about things that bother them, but only about two-thirds of boys say they can confide easily in their friends. Among boys in Grades 6 and 8, the number who cannot easily confide in friends rose throughout the 1990s.

While we need to encourage healthy friendships among young teens, the data also show that children of this age who spend a lot of unstructured time in the evenings with their friends are more

TALKING TO SAME SEX FRIENDS

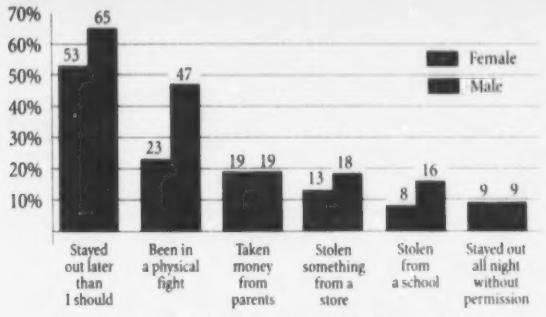
Found it "Easy" or "Very Easy" to talk about things that really bother them:



Source: AJC King, WF Boyce, and MA King. Trends in the Health of Canadian Youth: Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children, *1999.*

BEHAVIOUR OF YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 12 & 13, 1996

Did the following at least once:



Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the NLSCY, 1996.

likely to engage in high-risk behaviours such as smoking and using drugs or alcohol. In 1998, about one-third of boys and one-quarter of girls in Grade 8 reported spending five or more evenings a week out with their friends. Although much of this time involves organized activities with teams and clubs, a great deal of it is not supervised by adults.

By the time children are 12 or 13, they are more likely to break parental rules – or the law. Nearly 20% reported that they had taken money from their parents, and about the same proportion of boys said that they had stolen something from a store or a school. Girls were half as likely as boys to report that they had stolen things from school. Nearly half of boys this age report having been in a physical fight, compared to only 23% of girls. Most children this age, however, report having committed such acts less than three times, indicating that this behaviour may be part of experimentation in the adult world, rather than the beginning of a long-term negative trend. ●

Canadian youth value kindness and honesty

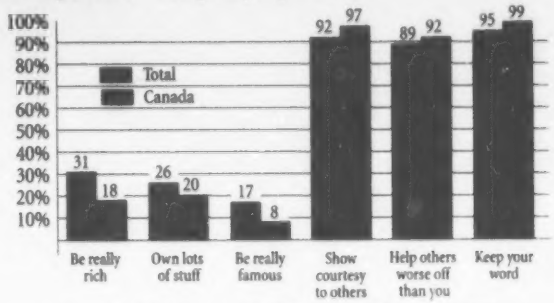
Compared to their peers in 10 other countries, Canadian youth place less value on wealth and fame, and more on being kind to others and honest. According to an Angus Reid poll, 97% of Canadian youth consider it important to be courteous; more than 90% feel it is important to help those who are worse off than themselves. Almost all (99%) consider it important to keep one's word. By contrast, only a small minority of Canadian youth think it is important to be "really famous, own lots of stuff, or be really rich."

While the majority of young Canadians don't consider traditional institutions like church and marriage to be important, they still uphold values of spirituality and family commitment. Less than 40% of youth say that going to church is important, but slightly more than half feel it is important to discover their own religion and to get married. More than three-quarters feel it is important to have a lifelong partner. More than 60% think it is important to have children, and 71% think resisting temptation is important.

Young people in Canada are also concerned about their communities. About 51% are worried that people in the next century will become less involved in their local communities. ●

VALUES OF YOUTH AGED 12 TO 24, CANADA & 10 OTHER COUNTRIES, 1999

It is "Important" or "Completely Important" to:



Source: Angus Reid Group Inc. poll, "The Values of Youth," November 18, 1999.

Social Engagement

Social engagement refers to relationships or involvements – both positive and negative – with other family members, peers, community members, local institutions, and at the broadest level, with society.

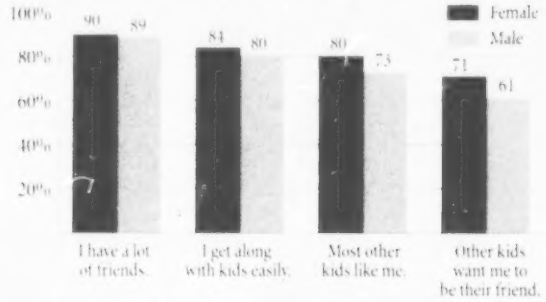
Friendships strengthen in early teen years

By the time children reach their early teens, their relationships with their peers grow in importance and they are moving towards independence from their parents. Having friends in whom they can confide and count on for support and with whom they can share good times contributes significantly to how confident young teens feel and how well they get along with their parents and at school. Research shows that young people who don't have good friendships are far more likely than other youth to manifest physical and mental health problems.

For the first time, NLSCY data are available about young Canadian teens' relationships. The data show that while most boys and girls aged 10 to 13 report having a lot of friends, fewer of the young teens are confident that they are well-regarded by their peers. Boys have less confidence about their standing with peers than do girls.

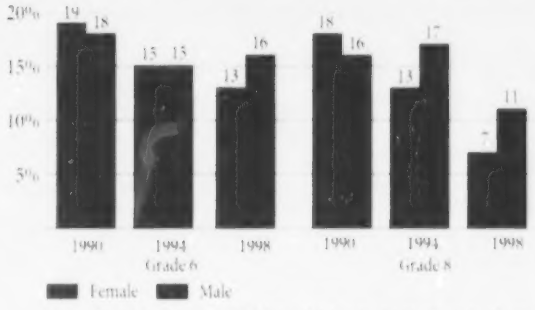
RELATIONSHIPS OF CHILDREN AGED 10 TO 13, 1996

Answered "True" or "Mostly True" to these statements:



Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the NLSCY, 1996.

STUDENTS WITH FEWER THAN TWO CLOSE FRIENDS



Source: AJC King, WF Boyce, and MA King, Trends in the Health of Canadian Youth: Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children, 1999.

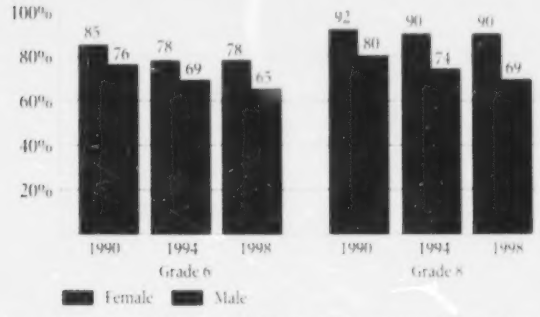
It is encouraging that data from the Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children study show that the proportion of children in Grades 6 and 8 who have fewer than two close friends dropped between 1990 and 1998, especially among Grade 8 girls. In 1990, nearly one in five girls of this age reported having fewer than two close friends, but by 1998, the proportion was only one in 14.

Nearly all girls of this age say that it is easy to talk to their same-sex friends about things that bother them, but only about two-thirds of boys say they can confide easily in their friends. Among boys in Grades 6 and 8, the number who cannot easily confide in friends rose throughout the 1990s.

While we need to encourage healthy friendships among young teens, the data also show that children of this age who spend a lot of unstructured time in the evenings with their friends are more

TALKING TO SAME SEX FRIENDS

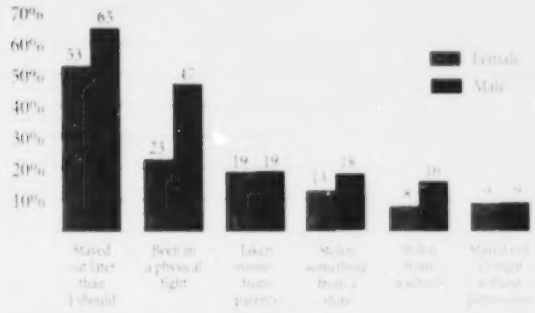
Found it "Easy" or "Very Easy" to talk about things that really bother them:



Source: M. King, WT. Boyce, and MA King. Trends in the Health of Canadian Youth: Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children, 1999.

BEHAVIOUR OF YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 12 & 13, 1996

Did the following at least once:



Source: Prepared by the Canadian Institute for Social Development using data from the NLSCY, 1996.

likely to engage in high-risk behaviours such as smoking and using drugs or alcohol. In 1998, about one-third of boys and one-quarter of girls in Grade 8 reported spending five or more evenings a week out with their friends. Although much of this time involves organized activities with teams and clubs, a great deal of it is not supervised by adults.

By the time children are 12 or 13, they are more likely to break parental rules – or the law. Nearly 20% reported that they had taken money from their parents, and about the same proportion of boys said that they had stolen something from a store or a school. Girls were half as likely as boys to report that they had stolen things from school. Nearly half of boys this age report having been in a physical fight, compared to only 23% of girls. Most children this age, however, report having committed such acts less than three times, indicating that this behaviour may be part of experimentation in the adult world, rather than the beginning of a long-term negative trend. ❋

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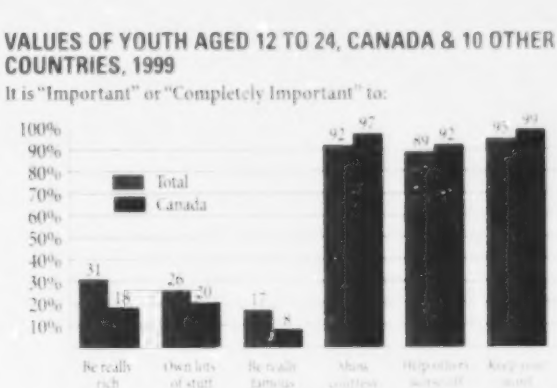


Source: Angus Reid Group Inc. poll, "The Globe and Mail," November 18, 1999.

Youth crime continues to decline

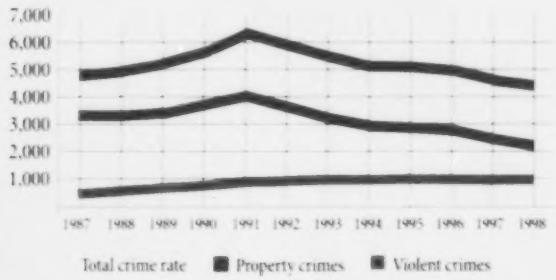
Between 1997 and 1998, the rate of criminal charges against youth dropped by 4%, to 4,363 per 100,000 youth. Youth property crime rates have been dropping since 1991, although violent crimes by youth rose in the early 1990s and began to drop only slightly after 1995.

Property crimes still make up the majority of youth crimes, accounting for 51% of all youth crimes, compared to only 37% of adult crimes. The rate for youth charged with violent crimes dropped only marginally between 1997 and 1998, remaining 77% higher than a decade ago. In 1998, 56 youth were charged with homicide, compared to 54 charged in 1997. However, the rate for youth charged with sexual assaults decreased for the fifth year in a row, reaching its lowest level since 1988. According to the Centre for Justice Statistics, both the number of youth charged with crimes and those not formally charged have been declining in recent years.

Over the last 10 years, the rate for young women charged with violent crimes has increased twice as quickly as the rate for young men. However, young men are still three times more likely than young women to be charged with violent crimes. ●

YOUTH CRIME RATES IN CANADA, 1987-1998

Rate per 100,000



Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from "Crime Statistics in Canada," in Juristat, *selected years.*

How safe are children at home?

While reported crime rates are declining in Canada, a large number of Canadian children are exposed to family violence, which often goes unreported. Between April 1997 and March 1998, nearly 43,000 children were taken by their mothers into shelters for abused women. A one-day national survey in April 1998 found that nearly 75% of children in shelters were under the age of 10. About one-third of the mothers in shelters because of domestic violence were also protecting their children from abuse.

According to the NLSCY, over 300,000 children under age 12 witnessed some violence in their homes in 1996. However, this was an 8% decrease from 1994. Children who were reported to have witnessed violence experienced higher rates of difficulties than children who had not. They were more likely to exhibit aggressive behaviours such as fighting, bullying or threatening; more likely to experience feelings of anxiety, depression or fear; more likely to exhibit indirect aggression such as rallying their friends against someone else; and more likely to commit property offences such as destroying property, vandalizing or stealing.

A new Health Canada study on reported child abuse and neglect, to be released in 2000, will provide a much clearer picture of how many children suffer physical, sexual or emotional abuse and neglect. It will also provide valuable information about what happens to these children once they come into contact with child welfare authorities. ●

Girls use help phone most frequently

Kids Help Phone (1-800-668-6868) operates 24 hours a day, every day of the year offering anonymous and confidential counselling, information, and referral services for children and teens.

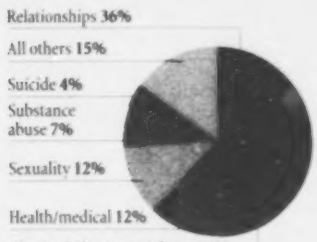
Every day, Kids Help Phone answers 800 to 1,000 calls. In 1998, Help Phone counsellors answered about 288,000 calls from almost 3,000 Canadian communities, and 76% of the callers that year were girls. About 22% of the calls were from francophones, an increase of 7 percentage points over 1997. Kids Help Phone also has a website *(http://kidshelp.sympatico.ca)* that is used increasingly by young people. In 1997, the website had 3,000 hits daily; by 1998, that had risen to about 4,400 hits per day, and in the first six months of 1999, they received, on average, about 5,400 hits every day.

In 1998, about 35% of the callers were between the ages of 10 and 14, 54% were aged 15 to 19, 9% were over age 20, and 1% were from children under 10 years of age.

Children and youth call the counsellors at Kids Help Phone for a variety of reasons. Calls to talk about relationships are the most common – which accounted for more than one-third of the calls in 1998 – and abusive behaviour and/or violence were second, at 14%. These proportions have remained stable over the last three years.

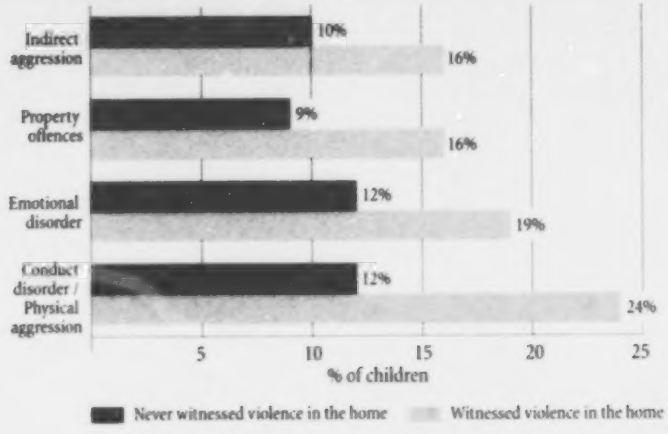
It is estimated that about 30% of calls received at Kids Help Phone are from children at risk. These children are experiencing violence at home or in their communities, they are struggling with alcohol or drug abuse, or they are trying to deal with issues related to suicide. With a rate of 442 calls per 100,000 children, 14-year-olds had the highest rate for calls concerning abuse or violence. ✸

WHY YOUNG PEOPLE CALL KIDS HELP PHONE, 1998



Source: "Being there for kids," Kids Help Phone 1998 Annual Report.

BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS AMONG CHILDREN AGED 4 TO 11, 1996



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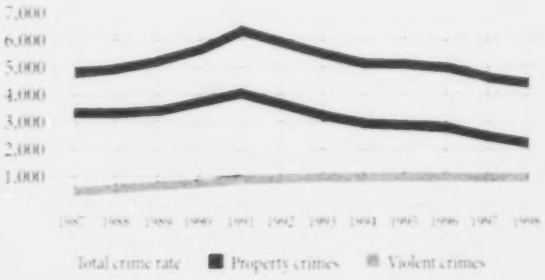

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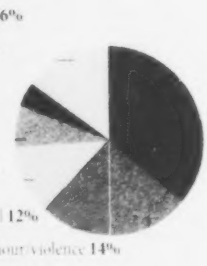
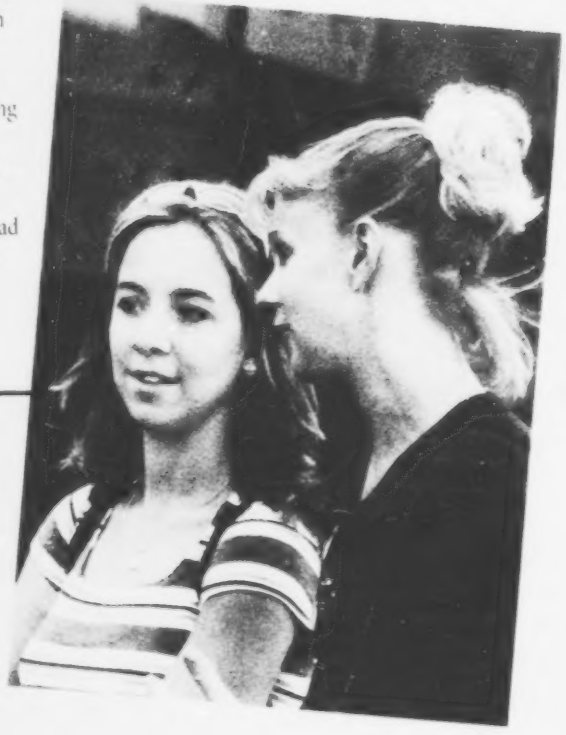


Source: "Bring Down So Kids' Kids Help Phone 1998 Annual Report.



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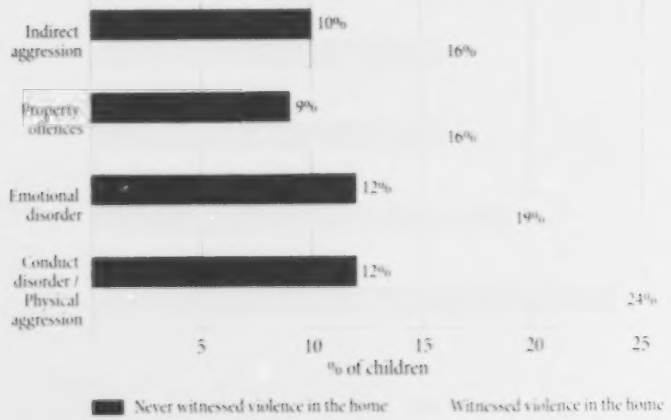


Source: Robin Fitzgerald, Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile, 1999.

School bullying creates response

One in 11 children aged 10 to 13 – about 130,500 children – report that they are bullied at school at least some of the time. In response to these high rates of bullying within school walls, administrators are developing innovative responses.

One example is the Peaceable Schools Project, designed by Nancy Burns, a social worker with the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board. She believes that incorporating social skills programs into school curricula as early as kindergarten would go a long way towards shaping students' views about their education and their peers. "They're really willing to learn new things at that age," she says. "It's almost like a new language for them."

Using a Learning Opportunity grant from the Ontario government, Burns and a team of psychologists designed an early years prevention program for primary schools. The program was created after research showed that verbal and physical aggression was common in most of the 151 schools they studied.

Before implementing an anti-bullying initiative, however, Burns says a school must first create the proper climate in order for it to be effective. "We have to re-educate teachers and parents about what it means to create a peaceable school," she says. "Not everyone thinks prevention is important." One of the first steps is for schools to take a tougher stance on verbal abuse in the playground and the classroom. "The school has to promote respect, and that includes language," she says. Burns sees a continuum between verbal and physical abuse: by correcting verbal abuse at the first instance, students learn not to tolerate abuse of any kind. And rather than adopt a "one-size-fits-all" approach, Burns says a school should be evaluated first, to determine its particular needs.

One example is the "Manners Police" project Burns supervised in Regina Public School. After students themselves had identified poor manners as the major cause of bullying and aggression, Burns helped them to set up an undercover "police force" whose officers gave out "tickets" for good behaviour. After a few weeks, detentions in the school had dropped to zero.

The key to this success, Burns says, was that students were allowed to take a constructive role in creating and maintaining their own learning environment. Rather than follow the teachers' rules, they followed those of their peers. "The kids became players in their own culture," she says. "Everyone needs to feel they have a stake."

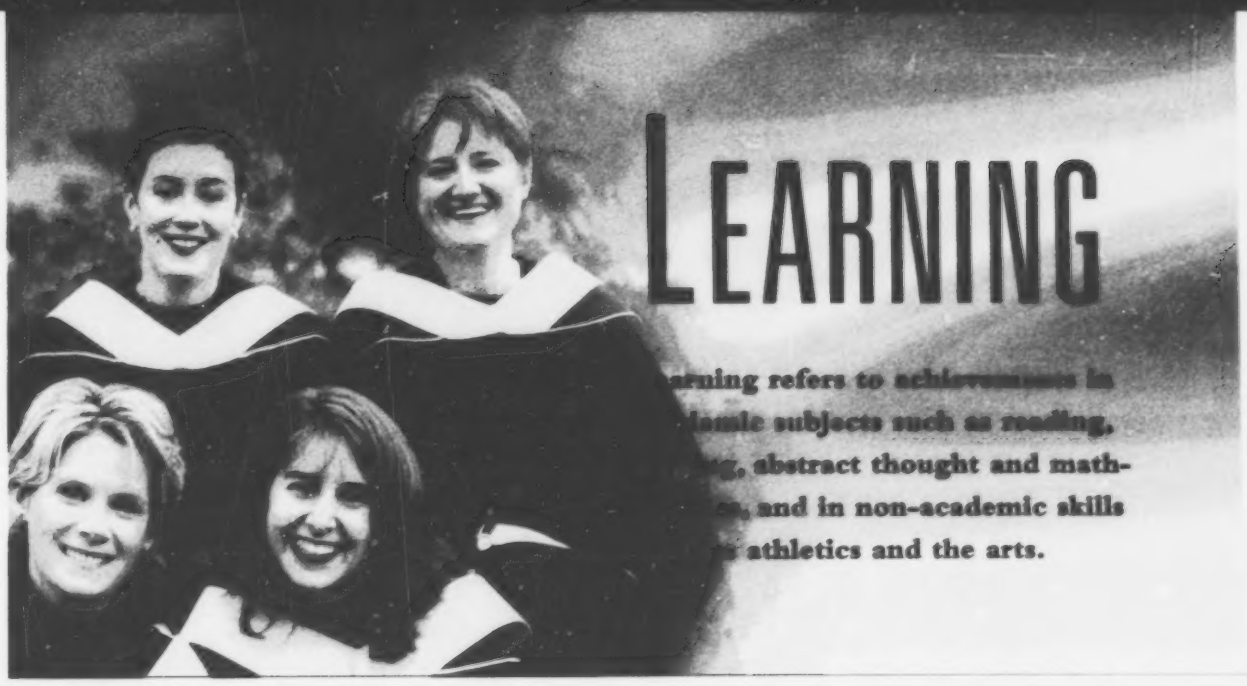
Changes in Canadian society may make it necessary for schools to incorporate social skills and resiliency projects into their curricula in the future. Burns believes the number of children learning these skills either at home or in church is declining, and schoolyard aggression is becoming a common factor across the country. "Kids don't have that cocoon," she says. "The social skills that they used to learn naturally don't come naturally anymore." ✸

YOUNG PEOPLE TALK ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

"I talk to my friends and they try to cheer me up. They'll take me to a movie or something."
(Susan, 13, Ottawa)

"Last year, I felt like taking one of my mother's knives and killing myself because there was this one kid who was hitting me and really bothering me."
(Steve, 11, Moncton)

"We have boy friends and girl friends, but it's not about sex or stuff like that."
(Debbie, 14, Ottawa)



LEARNING

arning refers to achievements in demic subjects such as reading, g, abstract thought and math- s, and in non-academic skills athletics and the arts.

Measuring children's learning

by Penny Milton

Some of today's education trends raise serious questions. In response to globalization of economies and concerns about Canada's international competitiveness, education has been described as "human capital development" – the means by which young people are prepared for the labour market. The emphasis is on preparing students for post-secondary education. For those who don't do well at school, the focus shifts to helping them enter the job market. But without an adequate education, the latter group is probably destined for low-paying work and limited opportunities. We need to raise the level of achievement in our schools so that all young people are able to successfully complete their education and all are equipped to move on, whether to further education, training or work that expands their economic opportunities.

External testing grows

There is a great deal of interest today in measuring how well our students are learning. Most jurisdictions have introduced province-wide testing at several grade levels. But while these assessments may measure academic achievement and skill mastery, they cannot tell us much about the social and emotional development of our children, nor about the development of team work, creativity, and leadership qualities – all essential to the new economy. We must be careful that improved academic performance is not achieved by reducing opportunities for children to develop in other important areas.

Less emphasis on non-academic skills

Many schools were once a hub of their communities, with public funds supporting services such as child care, health and nutrition. Today their role is more restricted. Education dollars are being reduced for any services beyond the core school program, thus potentially harming children and families who need additional supports in order to thrive. Children who do well on standardized tests are likely to do well in other areas, but their non-performing peers will fall further behind as these extra supports are scaled back.

Weak research data

More students are completing high school than ever before, but this may not be enough. At least one-third of students graduate with literacy levels that are inadequate for today's labour market. And teens are still dropping out of school, usually because they are not doing well academically – a process that begins early. It is important that we try to better engage these struggling students before they drift away from a school experience that they find alienating or uninteresting.

continued on page 48

Canada lacks research data that adequately measure children's learning outcomes and the factors that contribute to success. Data that are collected about school outcomes – such as standardized test results – are usually not coordinated among the provinces, leaving us with no ability to compare outcomes between different educational approaches. This could be rectified if the provinces worked more closely together to collect consistent data on contexts and programs, as well as performance scores.

Teachers under more pressure

Another trend today is towards reduced class sizes. This has popular appeal but may do little to improve learning outcomes if teachers find their workday loaded with additional administrative tasks, or there are fewer educational supports for students with extraordinary needs, and insufficient opportunities to develop new teaching skills.

We already know many effective ways to improve a child's school achievement. The engagement of parents in their child's education, early attention to the development of reading and writing skills, respect for different learning styles, the effective use of information and communications technologies, and school-wide improvement efforts all show promise. Only by paying attention to how school outcomes are achieved can we expect to improve our results.

With the growing emphasis on school learning as a means to prepare students for post-school destinations, children who under achieve are at risk of falling even further behind. As we enter the next millennium, our challenge will be to improve our average test scores by improving the outcomes of our lower-achieving students. And understanding how all children can optimize their learning potential is the key to our social and economic well-being. ✸

Penny Milton is Executive Director of the Canadian Education Association.

Critical learning occurs in earliest years

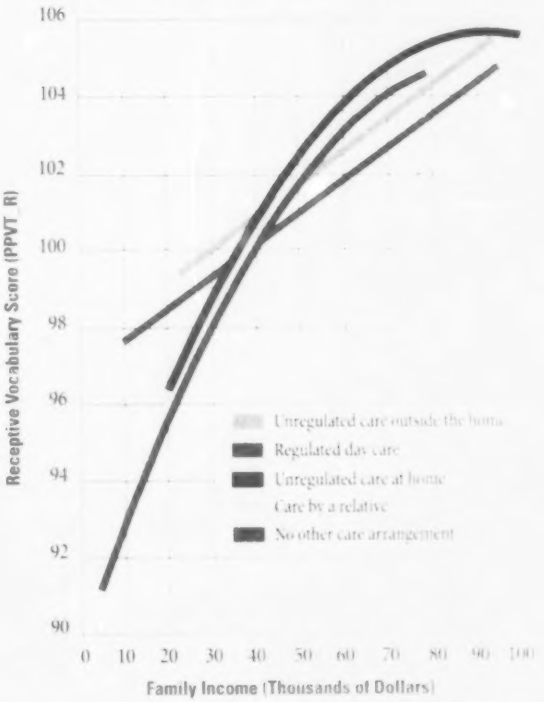
In several recent studies, early childhood care and education have been shown to have a strong, positive effect on children's learning.

Researchers using NLSCY data have found that children from low-income families who are cared for in either regulated or unregulated child care outside the home have cognitive skills superior to those of children who are cared for at home by a relative, or children who had no care arrangements. The differences were most substantial for children from families with household incomes of $15,000 or less.

A study by the US National Institute of Child Health and Human Development found the quality of child care that children receive during their first three years is consistently but modestly associated with their cognitive and language development. Researchers found that high-quality child care – where children received a lot of positive language stimulation and interaction from caregivers – resulted in better language abilities at 15 months, 24 months and 36 months, as well as better cognitive development at age 2 and school-readiness at age 3.

In the 1999 Ontario *Early Years Study* by Mustard and McCain, the authors found that child care and other early child development opportunities are important in the development of a child's brain. They recommend that learning in the early years be based on quality, developmentally attuned interactions with primary caregivers and that children be given opportunities for play-based problem-solving with other children. They also recommend that parents be a key part of early child development programs. ✸

PRESCHOOLERS' VOCABULARY SCORES AND CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS, BY FAMILY INCOME, 1994



Source: Dafna Kohen and Clyde Hertzman, "The Importance of Quality Child Care," from workshop paper for conference, Investing in Children, 1999.

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With the growing emphasis on school learning as a means to prepare students for post-school destinations, children who underachieve are at risk of falling even further behind. As we enter the next millennium, our challenge will be to improve our average test scores by improving the outcomes of our lower-achieving students. And understanding how all children can optimize their learning potential is the key to our social and economic well-being. ●

Penny Milton is Executive Director of the Canadian Education Association.

Critical learning occurs in earliest years

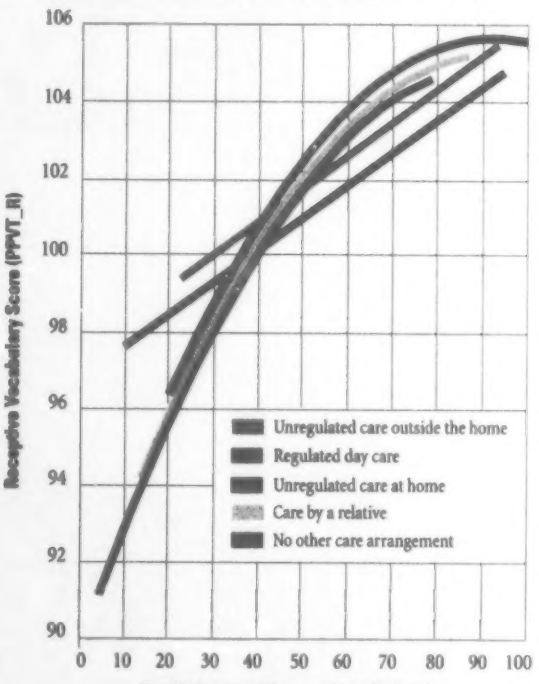
In several recent studies, early childhood care and education have been shown to have a strong, positive effect on children's learning.

Researchers using NLSCY data have found that children from low-income families who are cared for in either regulated or unregulated child care outside the home have cognitive skills superior to those of children who are cared for at home by a relative, or children who had no care arrangements. The differences were most substantial for children from families with household incomes of $15,000 or less.

A study by the US National Institute of Child Health and Human Development found the quality of child care that children receive during their first three years is consistently but modestly associated with their cognitive and language development. Researchers found that high-quality child care – where children received a lot of positive language stimulation and interaction from caregivers – resulted in better language abilities at 15 months, 24 months and 36 months, as well as better cognitive development at age 2 and school-readiness at age 3.

In the 1998 Ontario *Early Years Study* by Mustard and McCain, the authors found that child care and other early child development opportunities are important in the development of a child's brain. They recommend that learning in the early years be based on quality, developmentally attuned interactions with primary caregivers and that children be given opportunities for play-based problem-solving with other children. They also recommend that parents be a key part of early child development programs. ●

PRESCHOOLERS' VOCABULARY SCORES AND CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS, BY FAMILY INCOME, 1994



Source: Dafna Kohen and Clyde Hertzman, "The Importance of Quality Child Care," from workshop paper for conference, Investing in Children, 1998.

More parents put value on school achievement

Children's learning success is heavily influenced by the value that their parents place on education, by the parents' expectations for their offspring, and their participation in the child's schooling. According to the NLSCY, children whose parents had little interest in their schooling were seven times more likely to have repeated a grade than children whose parents thought education was very important.

The good news is that a growing proportion of parents place high importance on their child's school grades. In 1996, 62% of parents of children aged 8 and 9 thought that good grades were very important – up from 56% in 1994. Parents of more than 90% of children aged 4 to 11 hoped that their child would go on to post-secondary education – about the same proportion as in 1994.

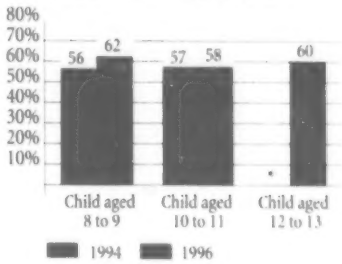
Also positive is the news that parents of more than 80% of children aged 6 to 13 report that they help their child with homework at least once a week – although that proportion drops as children get older. As well, 94% of parents of young children aged 2 to 5 read aloud to their children regularly, a similar number to 1994. This is another important contributor to children's learning success.

The data suggest that while low-income parents read to their young children and help with the older children's homework as often as parents in other income groups, they are less likely to participate at their child's school. This may be one of the reasons why children in lower-income families have poorer learning outcomes than their peers in more affluent households.

According to the 1996 NLSCY, parents of 90% of children aged 4 to 13 had spoken to, visited or corresponded with their child's teacher in the previous school year. For just over three-quarters of these children, the parents had visited their classroom, and just over one-quarter had parents who volunteered in the child's class or on a school trip. Parents of younger children were more likely to participate in their child's class than were parents of older children. Less than 5% had not participated in any school activities.

How welcome parents are made to feel in the school influences their participation in their child's school life. In 1996, parents of just over half of children aged 4 to 11 felt strongly that they were made to feel welcome in their child's school – a slightly lower proportion than in 1994. Fewer parents of older children felt welcome in the schools compared to parents of younger children. ✱

PARENTS WHO SAY GOOD SCHOOL GRADES ARE VERY IMPORTANT, BY AGE OF CHILD, 1994 & 1996



* *Data not available.*

Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the 1994 and 1996 NLSCY.

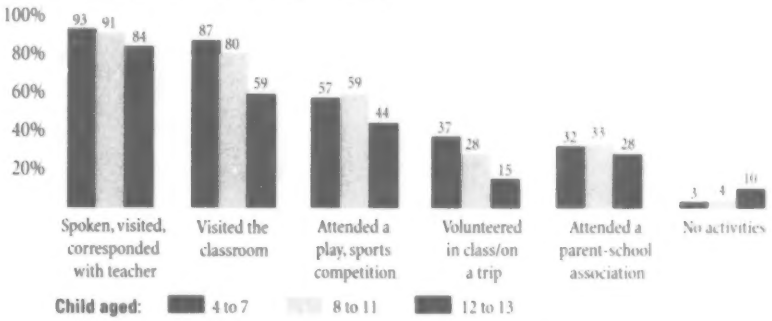
CHILDREN AGED 6 TO 13 WHOSE PARENTS CHECK OR HELP WITH THEIR HOMEWORK, 1996

Aged:	6 to 7	8 to 9	10 to 11	12 to 13
Parents help:				
Daily	63%	54%	38%	23%
Few times/week	17%	22%	33%	28%
Once/week	8%	11%	13%	15%
Less than once/week	12%	13%	15%	34%

Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the NLSCY, 1994 and 1996.

PARENTS INVOLVED IN THEIR CHILD'S SCHOOL, BY AGE OF CHILD, 1996

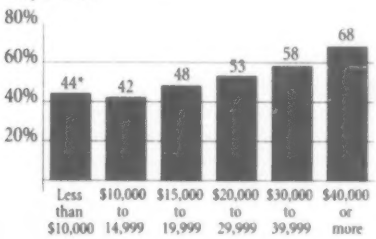
During the school year, have you done the following:



Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the NLSCY, 1994 and 1996.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL, BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME, 1996

Proportion of children aged 4 to 13 whose parents are very involved



* *Estimate less reliable due to small sample size.*

Teens' reading and writing abilities meet expectations

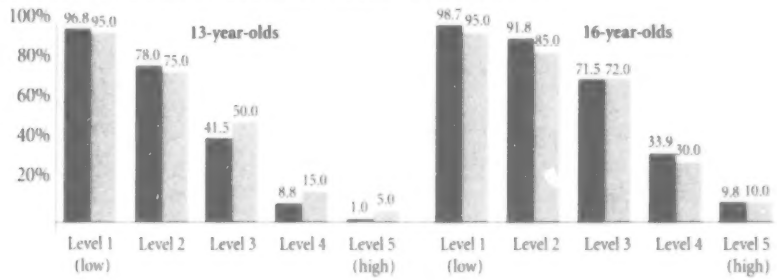
Canadian 13- and 16-year-olds are reading and writing at levels generally expected by experts, although fewer 13-year-olds show abilities at the very highest achievement levels, according to the 1998 test results from the Council of Ministers of Education.

The reading abilities of 13-year-olds did not change significantly in 1998 compared to 1994. More than 40% read at level 3 or higher, meaning that they could interpret, evaluate and explore meaning in complex texts and in some sophisticated ones. In their writing abilities, there were larger proportions of 13-year-olds at each level (from 1 to 4) in 1998 than in 1994.

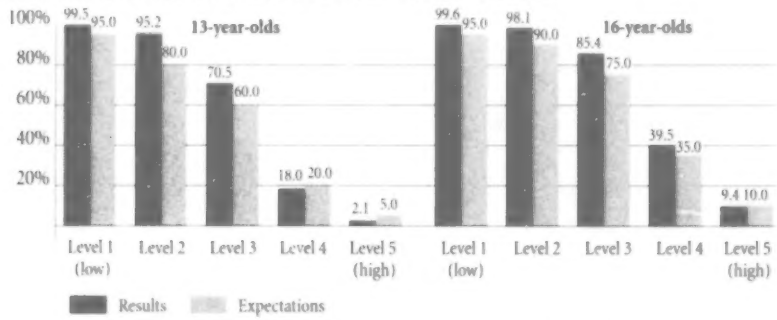
Among 16-year-olds in 1998, their reading abilities at the higher levels were similar to the results from 1994, with 72% able to interpret, evaluate and explore meaning in complex texts and surface meanings in sophisticated texts. This group's writing abilities showed some improvement, with 85% having at least general control of writing elements in 1998, compared to 72% in 1994.

Young women continued to score better than young men on tests of reading and writing abilities in 1998. For example, almost 22% more women than men aged 16 achieved level 3 or higher in reading, and 11% more achieved level 3 in writing. Among those aged 13, 23% more girls than boys attained at least level 3 in reading, and almost 20% more achieved level 3 in writing. ✸

READING ABILITIES OF STUDENTS AGED 13 AND 16, 1998



WRITING ABILITIES OF STUDENTS AGED 13 AND 16, 1998



Note: Performance scores at each level are cumulative. For example, all students who achieved Level 3 also achieved Levels 1 and 2, and they are included in both those counts.

Source: Council of Ministers of Education Canada, SAIP 1998: Report on Reading and Writing Assessment, *1999.*

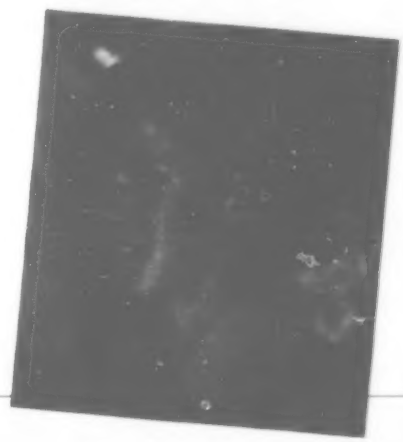
KIDS TALK ABOUT HOMEWORK

...as
...ver to
don't
...se if I
I hav
...in."
Monc

...ish m... e,
...nt to ... and
TV, h... comes
to chec... e done.
My teac... n't really
care if ... one spelling
error but my mom does."
(Nicholas, 11, Ottawa)

"At our school, we have a program called the 'homework club.' If people need help with homework, they just stay after school and teachers help them with it."
(Paul, 14, Ottawa)

"My dad will spend two hours looking for one single answer when I can do it in one."
(Barry, 16, Moncton)

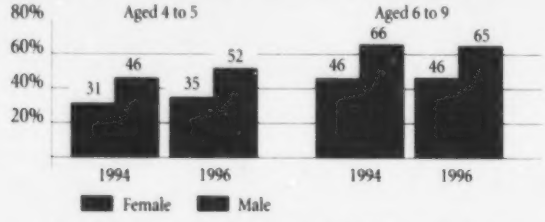


Kids spend more time on TV and computer games than on reading at home

Between 1994 and 1996, the proportion of 4- and 5-year-olds playing video games grew, although for kids aged 6 to 9, it remained stable. Canadian boys were more likely than girls to play computer and video games. Watching TV remained a popular daily pastime for 86% of children aged 4 and 5, although for kids aged 6 to 9, the proportion dropped from 81% to 76%. By contrast, only 60% of children aged 7 to 9 in 1996 read at home every day, an increase from 1994. ✹

PLAYING COMPUTER/VIDEO GAMES, BY AGE GROUP AND GENDER, 1994 & 1996

Proportion of children who played a few times a week or most days



Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the 1994 and 1996 NLSCY.

PROPORTION OF CHILDREN IN 1996 WHO:

	Age group	
	4 to 5	6 to 9
Watched TV every day	86%	76%
Watched TV a few times/week	7%	9%
At least a few times/week	93%	85%
Played computer/video games at least a few times/week	43%	56%
Read or are read to daily or at least a few times/week	92%	81%*

* *Includes kids aged 7 to 9.*

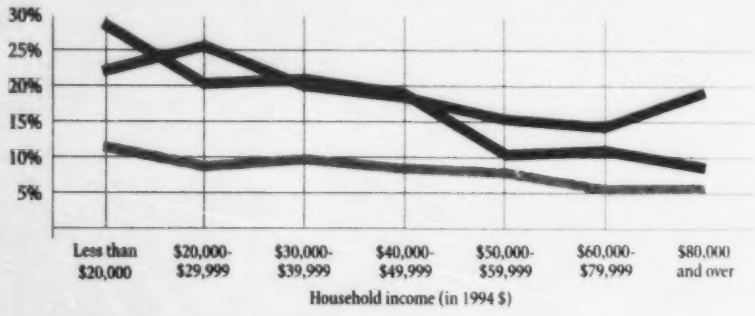
Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the 1996 NLSCY.

Children from low-income families are falling behind

Data from the 1996 NLSCY show that there has been little change since 1994 in the following learning-related outcomes for primary school children in low-income families:

- **Delayed vocabulary development is far more prevalent among children in low-income families than it is among children in high-income families. Only 9% of children from the highest-income families show delayed vocabulary development, compared to 28% of children from the lowest-income families.**
- **The proportion of children with low math scores – that is, scores in the bottom third – drops steadily as family income rises from $30,000 to $80,000.**
- **Twice the number of children in families with the lowest household incomes compared to those in families with the highest incomes receive special education.** ✹

LEARNING OUTCOMES BY AGE GROUP AND HOUSEHOLD INCOME, 1996



Note: All data refer to two-parent families.

* *Child aged 4 to 5 scored less than 85 on the PPVT scale.*

** *Child aged 6 to 11 received 0 to 5 on math test.*

*** *Child aged 4 to 11.*

Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the 1996 NLSCY.

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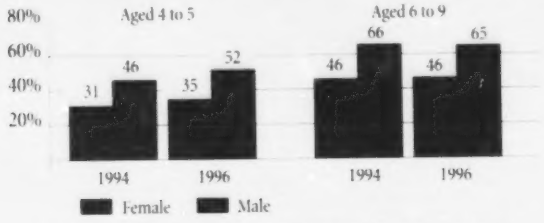

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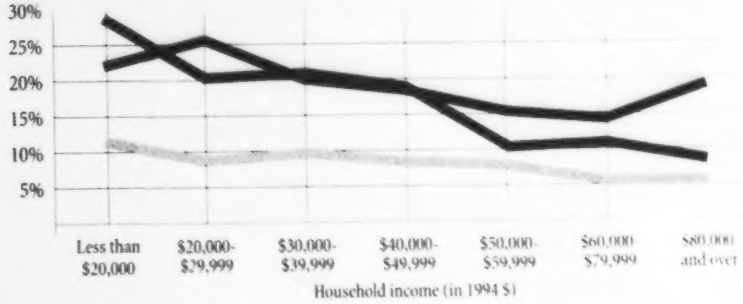

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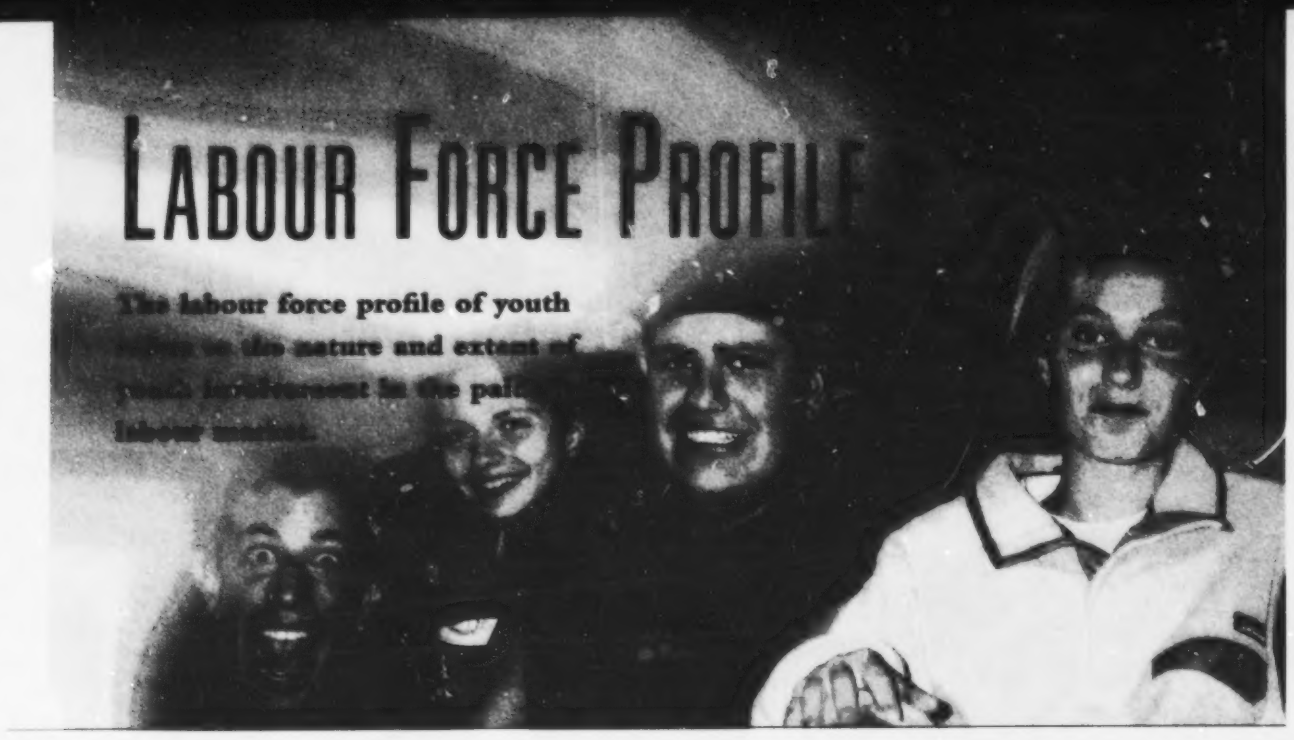


Job opportunities shrink for youth in the 1990s

by Richard Marquardt

Young people faced daunting challenges trying to enter the labour market in the 1990s. In the first part of the decade, a severe economic recession caused youth unemployment rates to soar to 17%, compared to 9.5% for adults aged 30 to 64. Even when the economy recovered later in the decade and the number of unemployed adults dropped below 7%, youth unemployment fell to only 15%.

On the positive side, the number of young people staying in school and completing post-secondary education is growing. This will provide them with much greater chances of obtaining good jobs when they enter the workforce in a labour market that increasingly requires skilled workers.

But this good news is tempered by the fact that students are having more difficulty than ever finding part-time or temporary employment. In last year's *Progress*, it was reported that the percentage of 16-year-olds who had never had a paying job grew from 26% in 1989 to 60% by 1996. Less than half of all youth aged 15 to 19 had jobs during the summer of 1997, down from two-thirds in 1989.

Fewer jobs mean lower incomes for youth at a time when family income levels have been stagnating and the costs of post-secondary education are rising. Young people from low-income families are most negatively affected.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES, BY AGE GROUP, SELECTED YEARS

	1981	1989	1993	1998
Aged 15-24	13.1%	11.2%	17.7%	15.2%
Aged 15-19	16.2%	13.0%	20.0%	20.0%
Aged 20-24	11.0%	10.0%	16.2%	12.3%
Aged 25-29	7.9%	8.4%	12.6%	8.6%
Aged 30-64	5.1%	6.3%	9.5%	6.9%
All ages (15-64)	7.6%	7.5%	11.2%	8.3%

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Historical Review, *1999*.

FULL-TIME SECONDARY AND POST-SECONDARY ENROLMENT, BY AGE, SELECTED YEARS

	1980/81	1987/88	1995/96
Age 15	96.6%	98.0%	98.8%
Age 16	89.7%	92.0%	95.1%
Age 17	69.8%	73.3%	82.0%
Age 18	40.3%	56.0%	58.9%
Age 19	27.5%	42.0%	47.2%
Ages 20-24	12.9%	19.0%	25.9%

Source: Statistics Canada, Education in Canada, *selected years*.

Lower incomes for working youth

Even the young people who have jobs are losing economic ground compared to their peers of a generation ago. Young men in their mid-20s earned approximately 20% less in the 1990s than those with equivalent education in the 1960s. Although young women's earnings have not dropped, they have not risen either. The wage gap between young men and women is narrowing, mainly because young men's earnings have been falling.

Meanwhile, the debt loads of young people who complete post-secondary studies have grown significantly higher due to large tuition increases in most provinces over the 1990s. This combination of lower incomes and higher debts makes it more difficult for young people to become established as independent adults in society.

There has been a startling increase in poverty rates among young people during the 1990s. Almost two-thirds of people under 25 who lived on their own in 1996 had incomes below the poverty line, compared to less than half in 1980. For families headed by young parents under 25, the poverty rate rose from 20% in 1980 to 42% by 1996.

Good jobs, bad jobs

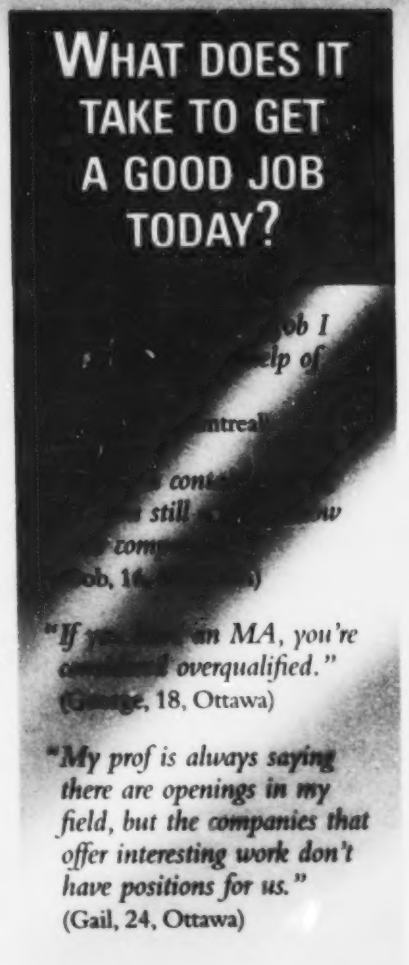
More than ever, young people entering the labour market in the 1990s face two kinds of jobs: those in the low-wage service sector, and those offering high wages but requiring advanced skills and several years of post-secondary education. There are good job opportunities in such fields as health sciences, information technologies and business administration, but prospects for youth in most other fields are less certain.

Even for young people with advanced education, finding entry-level jobs has been difficult. In 1995, more than 30% of all university and college graduates under age 25 were still working in typical, low-wage student jobs in stores, restaurants and other service industries. The young people who will suffer most in this economic environment are those who have not completed high school, for they will have to compete against people with post-secondary qualifications, even for service sector jobs.

"Just-in-time" work grows

In the drive to increase profits and reduce costs, service industries in particular have adopted employment practices that degrade the quality of work for employees. Young people are especially vulnerable to these practices because they are least likely to have seniority and bargaining rights. A growing number of young, involuntary part-time workers face jobs that are organized into split shifts, for example, in fast food establishments where employees are called in for a few hours only around mealtimes. Such jobs typically have no benefits, no training beyond an initial orientation, and no means of advancing to better jobs. Even in more skilled sectors, the trend towards using contract and temporary staff grew over the 1990s. ●

Richard Marquardt is an Ottawa-based social policy consultant specializing in labour market issues.


WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO GET A GOOD JOB TODAY?
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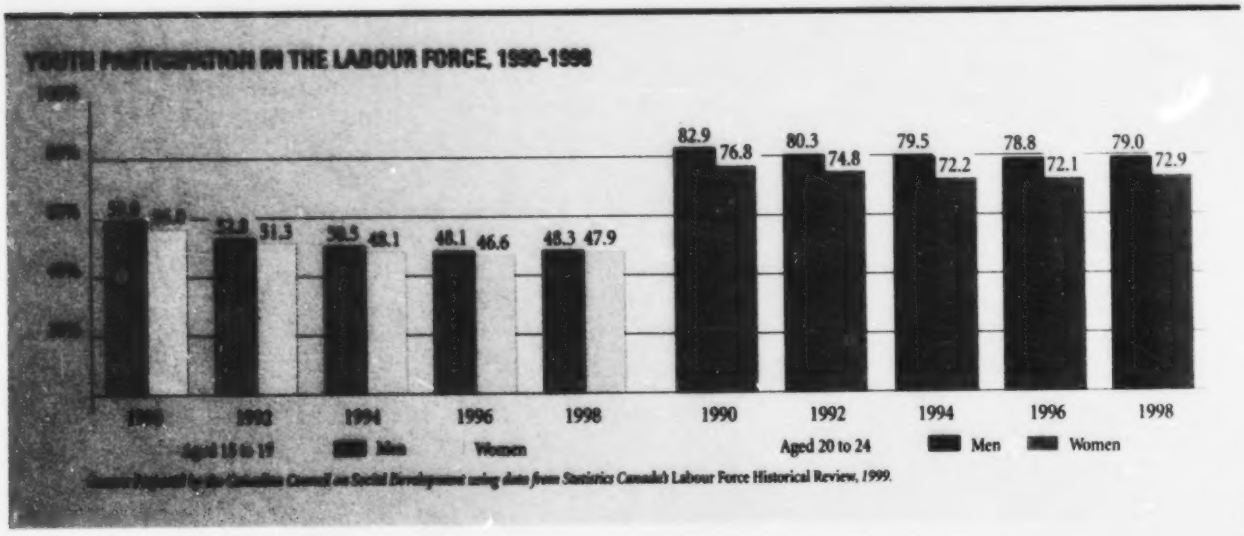

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WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO GET A GOOD JOB TODAY?

"...job I ...help of ..."
(...Montreal)

"...a contact is great, but you still need to show your competence."
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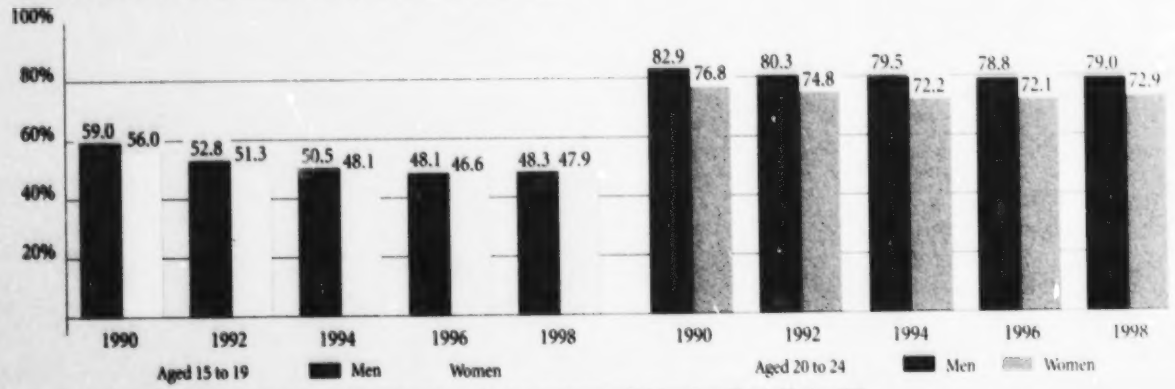
YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN THE LABOUR FORCE, 1990-1998



Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Historical Review, *1999*

Does post-secondary education pay off in the job market?

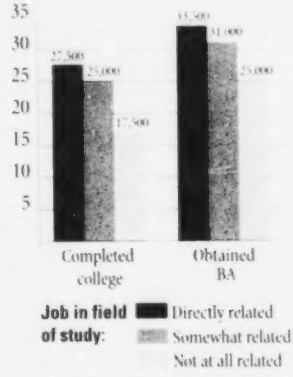
After investing considerable time and money in their studies, post-secondary graduates usually hope for good returns in the form of jobs in their field at decent wages. University and college graduates do have high rates of employment. Data show that 83% of post-secondary graduates who completed their studies in 1995 had found jobs by 1997, almost all of which were full-time. Their unemployment rate of 9.2% was similar to that of the general population, and much lower than the rate for their peers who had no post-secondary education.

However, the skills and abilities that students gained from their post-secondary education did not necessarily guarantee them a job in their field. In 1997, only 41% of Canadians aged 15 to 24 who had graduated in 1995 and were working full-time had jobs that were directly related to their field of study. Those who were working in their field, however, found that their education paid off: two years after leaving school, they were earning $8,500 to $10,000 more per year than graduates working in unrelated fields.

Overall, post-secondary education remains an important entry route into the labour market for youth. The challenge is to provide more jobs that will utilize the skills and abilities that young people have developed through their post-secondary education – jobs that enable them to develop their potential. This is even more important now, given the rising debt loads that students are incurring to complete their post-secondary studies. ✸

AVERAGE INCOME OF COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY GRADUATES AGED 25 AND YOUNGER, 1997

(Income $ thousands)



Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using microdata from Statistics Canada's National Graduates Survey, 1997.

More youth turn to self-employment

A growing number of young Canadians are turning to self-employment as a way of entering the labour market, often in response to difficulties they have had finding traditional jobs. In 1996, nearly 80,000 Canadian youth aged 15 to 24 were self-employed, an increase of 14,000 from 1991.

There are different ways young people can be self-employed. In 1996, 16,500 youth aged 15 to 24 worked without pay in their parents' business. That same year, more than 47,500 Canadian youth worked on their own, for themselves. In fact, most of the increase in self-employment between 1991 and 1996 was due to that type of self-employment. Other young people have succeeded in running their own businesses and have hired other employees – in 1996, nearly 15,000 young Canadians had their own businesses before they were 25.

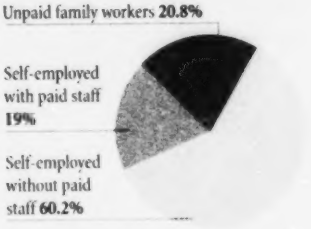
Census data show that more young Canadians are turning to self-employment to gain access to the labour market. As yet, however, we cannot measure the quality of the jobs they create. There are indications that not all of them are 'good' jobs, but the experience young people gain while self-employed may allow them to secure their position in the labour market over the long term. ✸

SELF-EMPLOYED RATE OF YOUTH AGED 15 TO 24, 1981 – 1996

1981	1986	1991	1996
2.6%	2.6%	2.6%	3.3%

Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's Census, Nation Series, 1981-1996.

DISTRIBUTION OF SELF-EMPLOYMENT AMONG YOUTH AGED 15 TO 24, 1996



Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's Census, Nation Series, 1996.

Does post-secondary education pay off in the job market?

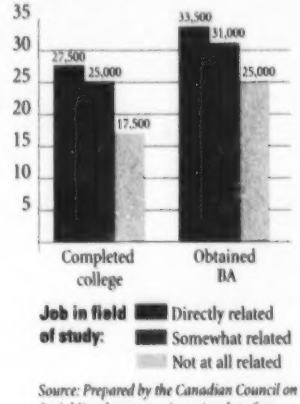
Investing considerable time and money in their studies, post-secondary graduates usually hope for good returns in the form of jobs in their field at decent wages. University and college graduates do have high rates of employment. Data show that 83% of post-secondary graduates who completed their studies in 1995 had found jobs by 1997, almost all of which were full-time. Their unemployment rate of 9.2% was similar to that of the general population, and much lower than the rate for their peers who had no post-secondary education.

However, the skills and abilities that students gained from their post-secondary education did not necessarily guarantee them a job in their field. In 1997, only 41% of Canadians aged 15 to 24 who had graduated in 1995 and were working full-time had jobs that were directly related to their field of study. Those who were working in their field, however, found that their education paid off: two years after leaving school, they were earning $8,500 to $10,000 more per year than graduates working in unrelated fields.

Overall, post-secondary education remains an important entry route into the labour market for youth. The challenge is to provide more jobs that will utilize the skills and abilities that young people have developed through their post-secondary education – jobs that enable them to develop their potential. This is even more important now, given the rising debt loads that students are incurring to complete their post-secondary studies. ●

AVERAGE INCOME OF COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY GRADUATES AGED 25 AND YOUNGER, 1997

(Income $ thousands)



Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using microdata from Statistics Canada's National Graduates Survey, 1997.

More youth turn to self-employment

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There are different ways young people can be self-employed. In 1996, 16,500 youth aged 15 to 24 worked without pay in their parents' business. That same year, more than 47,500 Canadian youth worked on their own, for themselves. In fact, most of the increase in self-employment between 1991 and 1996 was due to that type of self-employment. Other young people have succeeded in running their own businesses and have hired other employees – in 1996, nearly 15,000 young Canadians had their own businesses before they were 25.

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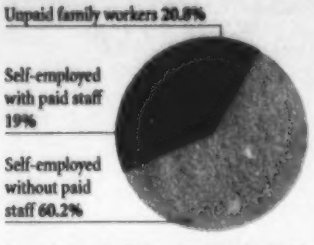


Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's Census, Nation Series, *1996.*

Youth unemployment a challenge in all western countries

Unemployment rates among youth in Canada are about the same as those in Ireland and Portugal, they are lower than rates in France and Sweden, but higher than those in the United States and Great Britain. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), youth unemployment is one of the most serious social and political challenges faced by governments in western countries as the millennium dawns. Despite upturns in the economy, most of these countries – including Canada – face double-digit youth unemployment rates. To date, little progress has been made in dealing with this problem.

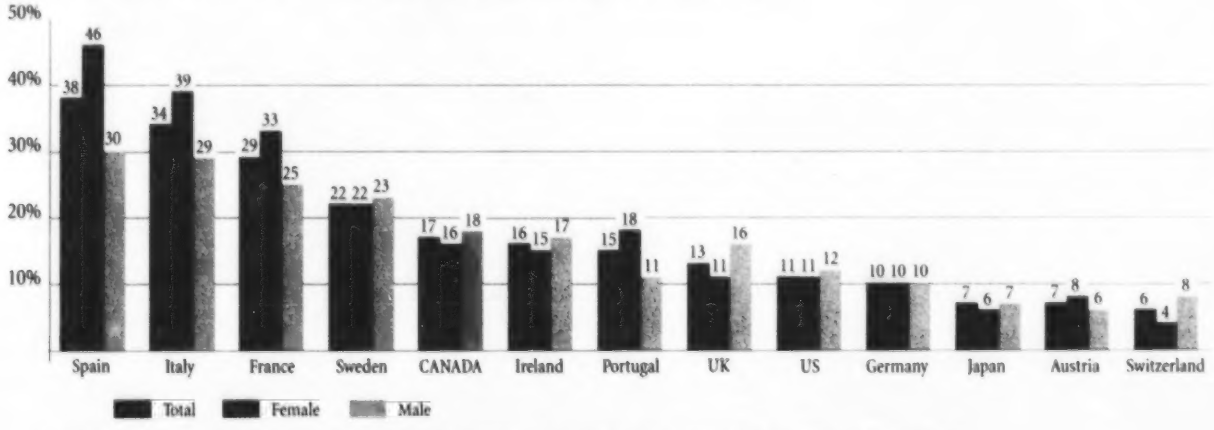
The OECD, which has 29 western countries as members, reports that:

- Youth unemployment rates have generally been higher than rates for older workers – in some cases, three to six times higher.
- The average employment rate for youth in the OECD countries dropped from 53% in 1979 to 45% in 1998. Increased school enrolment rates are only part of the reason for this decline.
- Young people with low levels of education and youth from poor socio-economic backgrounds often fare worse in the job market than their better-educated, more-affluent peers and than older workers.
- There is a hard core of youth who suffer through prolonged periods of unemployment and low-wage work.
- About one-fifth of all unemployed youth live in households where no one else is employed.

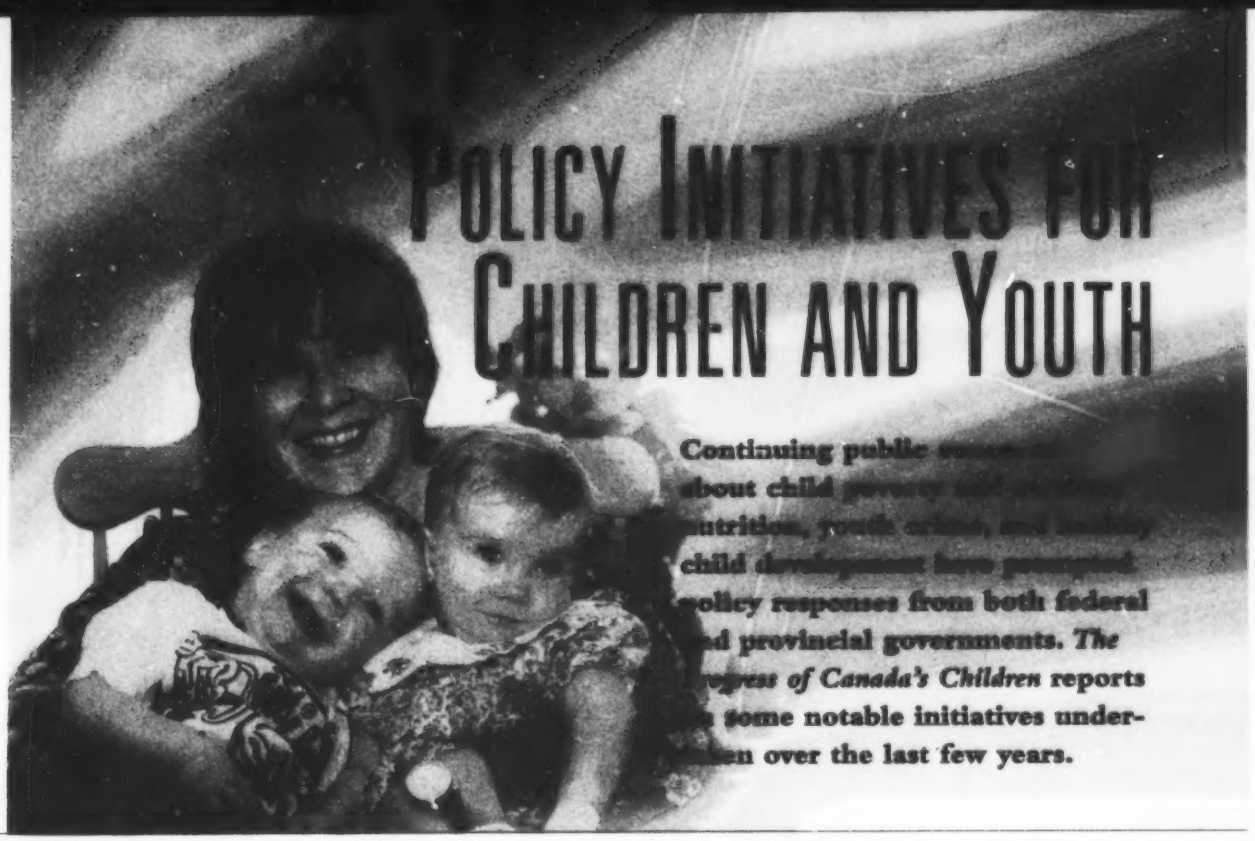
The OECD found that programs targeted to "youth-at-risk" have generally failed to provide any real gains for this group. But the failures have provided some insights into what doesn't work and ways to improve the approaches. Suggestions by the OECD to improve employment programs for youth include the following:

- Governments and local employers should collaborate to improve the quality of jobs.
- Integrate education and work-based learning, rather than providing short-term job training programs.
- Provide high-quality instruction.
- Offer opportunities for further education and training.
- Tailor support services to the needs of the participants, for example, provide child care and counselling.
- Evaluate programs continuously and use the results to improve the quality of programs offered. ✹

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES FOR YOUTH UNDER 25, SELECTED OECD COUNTRIES, 1997



Note: A country's youth unemployment rate is the number of youth seeking employment as a percentage of the total number of working and work-seeking youth.
Source: OECD, OECD in Figures 1999.



Policy Initiatives for Children and Youth

Continuing public [illegible] about child [illegible] nutrition, youth [illegible] child [illegible] policy responses from both federal [illegible] provincial governments. *The [illegible]ogress of Canada's Children* reports [illegible] some notable initiatives under-[illegible]en over the last few years.

National children's agenda moves forward

In 1999, the federal and provincial governments continued discussions on developing a National Children's Agenda that would include co-ordinated programs and policies to improve child outcomes. The idea originated in 1997, after a federal-provincial agreement was reached on providing income support for poor parents through the National Child Benefit. Acting on advice from child development advocates calling for more comprehensive government actions to improve children's education, health and social services, the federal, provincial and territorial ministers released a vision paper in May 1999.

The paper's goals for Canadian children include "good physical and emotional health; safety and security; success at learning; and social engagement and responsibility." These are to be achieved by "supporting the role of parents and strengthening families; enhancing early child development; improving economic security for families; providing early and continuous learning experiences; fostering strong adolescent development; and creating supportive, safe and violence-free communities." With the paper's release, the federal and provincial/territorial governments intended to set priorities for a National Children's Agenda and they held limited consultations in June 1999 to solicit input from selected groups.

In October, the National Children's Agenda received significant support when it figured prominently in the Throne Speech. In a subseqent speech to Parliament, Prime Minister Chrétien outlined several possible components, including extended maternity/parental leave, tax cuts for families with children, family law reforms and new monies for the National Child Benefit. The government challenged the provinces and territories to negotiate an agreement to strengthen supports for early childhood development by December 2000.

> After a decade of eroding family incomes and cutbacks in public support, it is time to reinvest in Canada's children.

Non-governmental organizations interested in children, youth and families (represented by the National Children's Alliance) have called on governments to develop a five-year action plan for children with clear objectives and sufficient public funds, starting in 2000. They have highlighted the need for improved economic security for families with children, better parental supports, and broad access to early childhood education and developmental opportunities. The Alliance states that "after a decade of eroding family incomes and cutbacks in public support, it is time to reinvest in Canada's children." ✸

How Canada's family policies compare

A recent study of child outcomes and social policies in selected western countries shows that a strong, universal safety net leads to the greatest reductions in child poverty and better outcomes for children. Shelley Phipps, a Dalhousie University economist, looked at outcomes for children in the context of changing employment patterns, work, family status, health and education in five countries: Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Norway and the Netherlands.

Canadian policies and child outcomes are better than those of the United States, but they compare considerably less favourably to those of Norway. Phipps found that the United States targets assistance to the very poor, Norway adopts the most universal approach, and Canada, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands have mixed approaches to social policy. She concludes that countries which target their social programs to the poor have the worst records of alleviating poverty, and countries which pursue a universal strategy have "vastly superior track records."

Norwegian policies are aimed at providing some support for all children. Universal cash transfers are combined with programs to make it easier for parents to join the workforce, and there is universal health care. Norwegian children have a lower incidence of asthma, are less likely to have accidents, and are less likely to be anxious or frightened than children in the other countries.

By contrast, in the United States – where the policy strategy is to help children in need, but otherwise let families fend for themselves – children have consistently worse outcomes than the four other countries studied. Despite higher overall health spending, both infant mortality rates and the incidence of low weight births are higher, and American children are more likely to be aggressive and obese than children in the other countries.

According to Phipps, the Norwegian approach strives to provide a basic standard of living for all citizens. "Although fiscal conservatives might argue that this is naïve, since it is likely to be extremely bad for overall economic performance," and could deter poor parents from joining the labour force, both the macroeconomic data and the unemployment figures for the countries studied show exactly the opposite. ✹

Prenatal nutrition gets a boost

The Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP) was announced in July 1994. Jointly managed by the federal, provincial and territorial governments, as well as First Nations and Inuit communities, CPNP assists communities to develop or enhance comprehensive programs for pregnant women considered to be at risk, in order to improve their birth outcomes. By 1998, CPNP had provided services to approximately 20,000 clients. In 1999, the program received additional federal funding to enable it to reach more pregnant women at risk.

Each year, approximately 35,000 babies born in Canada are estimated to be at risk due to their mother's poor health and nutrition. Poor maternal nutrition can cause low birth weight in babies, and low birth weight is linked to about two-thirds of all newborn deaths. It also creates greater risks of developing serious and lifelong disabilities for the babies who survive. The Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program is administered through community-based organizations that offer food supplementation, nutrition counselling, support, education, skill-building, referral, and lifestyle counselling for pregnant women who are most likely to have unhealthy babies.

About 20% of women participating in the CPNP enter the program with low pre-pregnancy weight due to poor nutrition. Nearly 80% of the CPNP-funded programs serve pregnant women living in poverty, teens, those who use alcohol or other substances, women living in violent situations, and women who are isolated.

Three times out of five, the CPNP-funded programs are a community's only source of prenatal nutrition services. Where other services exist, they are often not designed for, nor easily accessible to the at-risk clientele for whom the CPNP is intended. Many experts consider the CPNP to be an important first step in improving young children's life chances. ✹

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Alternative measures for youth justice

Last year, *Progress* outlined proposed changes to the criminal justice system for youth. The Youth Criminal Justice Act, introduced this year, will replace the Young Offenders Act. It encourages alternatives to the court system for youth who have committed minor, non-violent crimes. While alternative measures are permitted under the current system, the proposed changes are designed to clarify the objectives of these measures and to encourage their use. Currently, young people who come into contact with the law are more likely to go to court than to participate in alternative measures programs: in 1997-98 for every 10,000 young people in Canada, 134 participated in alternative measures, whereas 400 cases were brought to youth court.

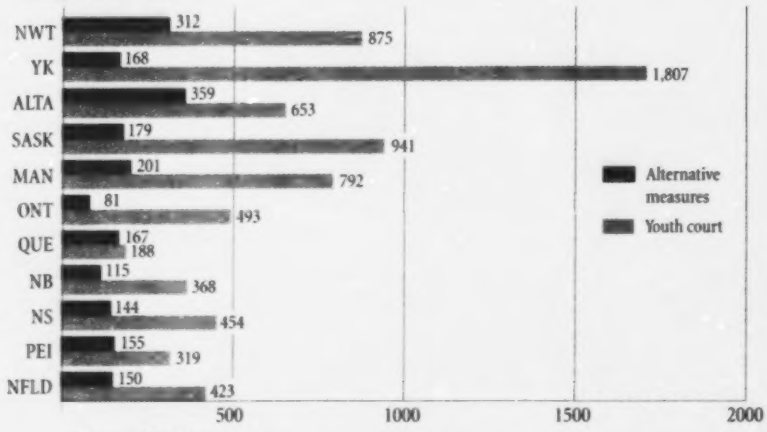
Alternative measures programs allow young people to avoid criminal records while still holding them accountable for their actions. To take part in an alternative measures program, a young person must acknowledge responsibility for the offence, and once in a program, they must complete one or more measures within a set period of time. Common alternative measures include making written or personal apologies to victims, producing essays or posters focusing on crime prevention, making financial restitution or providing personal services to victims, participating in educational programs, or performing community services.

Programs and eligibility requirements vary from province to province, and alternative measures are being used in some provinces more than in others. Alberta has the highest participation and Ontario the lowest.

Young people are usually referred to alternative measures for property-related crimes, the majority (57%) for theft under $5,000. Proportionately, girls are more likely than boys to participate in alternative measures than to be charged or brought to youth court. Most youth involved in these programs (89%) successfully complete all the measures agreed upon in the contract. They are usually required to perform community services (22%) or to apologize (18%). ✹

PARTICIPATION IN ALTERNATIVE MEASURES AND YOUTH COURT, BY JURISDICTION*, 1997/98

Rate per 10,000 youth



* *Excludes British Columbia*

Source: M. Kowalski, "Alternative Measures for Youth in Canada," in Juristat, *Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Vol. 19, No. 8, 1999.*

Aboriginal child care grows in Saskatchewan

First Nations communities in Saskatchewan developed 39 new child care facilities between 1996 and 1999, using a federal government funding initiative designed to make child care services for children under six as accessible in First Nations and Inuit communities as they are in the general population.

In 1995, there were only 11 child care facilities among the province's 71 First Nations communities. A survey of the communities by the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations identified a need for 4,880 spaces in 1996, rising to 5,436 spaces by 1998. By 1999, services for almost 900 children had been developed. The new child care programs are managed by First Nations and are designed to be sensitive to the communities' culture, language and needs.

The new child care services were developed by a regional working group that included a technical person from each of the nine Tribal Councils and a representative from the Independent First Nations. The group researched child care options, suggested licensing approaches and appropriate legislation, and developed strategies to help the communities with their child care.

The Tribal Councils license and monitor their own centres or delegate this responsibility to the Federation's Health and Social Development Commission. With a shortage of qualified staff for the programs, the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies is developing a newly accredited orientation program. Currently, training is offered in four locations and includes options for people to train in their own communities – combining distance education with traditionally delivered courses.

Child care services are new to most Saskatchewan First Nations communities. As a result of this initiative, there are now 864 children cared for in safe and supportive environments. ●

Quebec's family policy

Since announcing its family policy in 1997, the government of Quebec has implemented significant changes in the tax and income benefits for families with children, introduced $5 per day child care for preschoolers, and increased housing assistance for low- and moderate-income earners. A plan to improve parental leave benefits is still awaiting negotiations with the federal government, which now proposes to extend benefits to all Canadians.

According to Ruth Rose, an economist at the University of Quebec at Montreal, these family policy changes have improved somewhat the disposable incomes of low- and moderate-income families, penalized families on welfare, and greatly benefited middle- and upper-income families who use licensed child care. They have also kept step with the changing demographics in Quebec, where birth rates are at a historic low and most parents work outside the home. Birth allowances and those for young children, which were intended to encourage large families, have been abolished.

Rose supports the family policy changes insofar as they support working mothers and increase government investments in families "in a province which already gives more than any other province." She also hails the changes as "a major breakthrough in creating universally accessible child care," although "there continue to be problems one would expect from the too-rapid expansion of child-care services and the quality of services may be in danger."

Rose is very critical of the effect that the Quebec policy has had on mothers and children living on welfare: their incomes have dropped as a result of the changes, and welfare mothers must now pay part of the cost of their own prescription drugs, although they are free for children. She also notes that the child care program rules mean that a single mother using the program and earning $20,000 has only a little more disposable income than one earning $15,000. ●

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Technical Note

The Progress of Canada's Children is based on a large database of information on children, youth and families in Canada. It is built on **environmental indicators**, which represent the developmental influences that affect child development, and **progress indicators**, which are general measures of how well our children and youth are faring.

A three-tiered model has been developed to organize the wealth of data the CCSD has assembled on selected environmental and progress indicators. **Simple indicators** constitute the first tier. They represent data that are measured over time against a base period to indicate the direction of change. Simple indicators are grouped under a number of **intermediate indicators**, the second tier. These indicators represent key determinants or outcomes of child well-being. The intermediate indicators are grouped into a third tier of **composite indicators** that assess both the environment of child development and children's progress through specific developmental periods.

Because of space limitations, *The Progress of Canada's Children* presents only a small portion of the research. The following chart outlines the model of composite and intermediate indicators that was used. Please contact the CCSD for further information. ●

ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS

Family Life
- family structure
- work and family
- family dynamics
- parental health
- parental education

Economic Security
- level of income
- source of income
- distribution of income
- stability of income
- family expenditures

Physical Safety
- environmental hazards
- injuries
- crime and violence

Community Resources
- education
- housing
- health
- child and family supports
- leisure and culture

Civic Vitality
- affiliation
- participation
- expectations

PROGRESS INDICATORS BY AGE GROUP

Health Status
- physical health
- socio-emotional health
- physical and social risks

Social Engagement
- family relationships
- peer relationships
- community relationships

Learning
- academic experiences and achievements
- non-academic skill development and leisure

Labour Force Profile of Youth
- labour force activity
- earnings and income

Annual Update: Selected Indicators

The Progress of Canada's Children is based on a large database of information on children, youth and families. Our goal is to track these indicators over time to monitor the environments in which children live and grow and to see how well they are doing.

In the tables that follow, we present our update of indicators that are available on an annual basis. These data refer to changes between 1994 – our baseline year – and 1997, unless otherwise indicated.

Family Life

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES	TREND	NOTES
Fertility rate	decreased	
Children living in 2-parent families	decreased	
Children living in lone-parent families	increased	
Family size		
Average family	no change	
Average 2-parent family	no change	
Average lone-parent family	no change	
Youth (15-19 yrs) living with their families (%)	no change	1994 to 1998
Young adults (20-24 yrs) living with their families (%)	decreased	1994 to 1998

Sources: Statistics Canada. *Survey of Consumer Finances*, 1998; *Annual Demographic Statistics*, 1998.

WORK AND FAMILY	TREND	NOTES
Children in 2-parent families by labour force activities of parents (%)		
Both full-time	decreased	
1 Full-time, 1 part-time	increased	
1 Full-time, 1 not in labour force	decreased	
Neither in labour force	decreased	
Children in lone-parent families by labour force activity of parent (%)		
Full-time	increased	
Part-time	increased	
Not in labour force	decreased	

Sources: Statistics Canada. *Survey of Consumer Finances*, 1998.

Economic Security

FAMILY EXPENDITURES	TREND	NOTES
Estimated cost of raising a child (up to age 18, Manitoba)	decreased	1999 data

Source: Manitoba Agriculture. "The Cost of Raising a Child 1999," *in Family Finance.*

STABILITY OF INCOME	TREND	NOTES
National unemployment rate	decreased	1998 data
Families with children that experience a period of long-term unemployment (%)	decreased	
Canadians worrying about job loss	decreased	1999 data

Sources: Statistics Canada. *Labour Force Survey 1998* and *Survey of Consumer Finances*, 1998; Angus Reid Public Opinion Polls. "Canadian Job Anxiety Drops to Lowest Point," August 30, 1999

DISTRIBUTION & LEVEL OF INCOME	TREND	NOTES
Number of poor children	increased	1994 to 1997
Child poverty rate (%)	increased	
Among 2-parent families	increased	
Among lone-parent families	decreased	
Poverty gap of families with children	decreased	1994 to 1997
Human Poverty Index (HPI-2)	better ranking	1997 to 1998
Average after-tax family income ($)		
2-parent families	increased	
Lone-parent families	increased	

Sources: Statistics Canada. *Survey of Consumer Finances,* 1998; UNDP. *Human Development Report, 1999.*

SOURCES OF INCOME	TREND	NOTES
Children living in families that rely primarily on transfers (%)	decreased	
Children living in families that rely primarily on earnings (%)	increased	

Source: Statistics Canada. *Survey of Consumer Finances,* 1998.

Physical Safety

CRIME & VIOLENCE	TREND	NOTES *(Refers to 1998 data)*
Crime rate	decreased	down for the 7th consecutive year (does not include trafficking)
Violent crime rate	decreased	down for the 6th consecutive year
Homicide rate	decreased	

Source: Sylvain Tremblay. "Crime Statistics in Canada, 1998," in *Juristat,* Vol. 19, No. 9, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics.

INJURIES	TREND	NOTES
Rate of injury-related death	decreased	Refers to 1996 data
Dwellings in need of major repair among households with children	N/A	No new data available
Gun-related deaths (0-24 yrs)	increased	

Source: CHIRPP using Statistics Canada's Mortality Data Tables.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS	TREND							NOTES
Year:	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	
Commitment to reduce greenhouse gases (Grade rating)	D	C+	D+	D-	F	Inc.	Inc	Despite thousands of pages of reports, most participants doubt that the process will result in an implementation plan.
Commitment to review & reform pesticide policies (Grade rating)	F	C	D	C-	F	F	D	The federal Minister of Health has promised amendments to the Pest Control Products Act.

Inc. indicates an incomplete grade.
Source: Sierra Club of Canada. *Seventh Annual Rio Report Card,* 1999. <www.sierraclub.ca>

Community Resources

CHILD CARE & CHILD WELFARE	TREND	NOTES
Licensed child care spaces	Over the past five years, the number of regulated child care spaces in most provinces has dropped or remained static.	Comprehensive national data on child care is not collected in Canada.
Average cost of child care ($ per month)	N/A	No new data available
Government expenditures on child care	Child care spending in most provinces declined or remained static in the 1990s, corresponding with withdrawal of federal financial support for child care.	
Children in care of child welfare system	Increased in 6 provinces and decreased in 2.	Quebec and Newfoundland did not provide data. The Territories are not included. Refers to 1997/98 data.

Source: Martha Friendly, written communications; and CCSD. Survey of Canadian Child Welfare Departments, September-October 1999.

HOUSING	TREND	NOTES
Children (0-17 yrs) by family type and housing tenure (%)		
Lone-parent families		
Own, with or without a mortgage	decreased	Statistics Canada combined "own with" and "without" a mortgage into one category in their Survey of Consumer Finances, 1998.
Rent	increased	
Other	***	
Two-parent families		
Own, with or without a mortgage	decreased	Statistics Canada combined "own with" and "without" a mortgage into one category in their Survey of Consumer Finances, 1998.
Rent	increased	
Other	***	

*** Sample size too small to be released.

Source: Statistics Canada. *Survey of Consumer Finances*, 1998.

EDUCATION	TREND	NOTES
Enrolment in pre-elementary programs	increased	
Enrolment in elementary/secondary school	increased	
Full-time post-secondary enrolment	increased	
Proportion of population (18-24 yrs) with some college or university	decreased	
Total expenditure on education as % of GDP	decreased	Refers to 1996 data
Proportion of students who rely on loans	increased	
Average tuition	increased	

Sources: Statistics Canada. *Education in Canada, 1998;* "University Tuition Fees," in *The Daily,* August 25, 1999; "University Finances" in *The Daily,* September 13, 1999; and OECD. *OECD in Figures, 1999.*

HEALTH RESOURCES	TREND	NOTES
Government expenditures on health services (as % of GDP)	decreased	Data for 1997 is forecast.

Source: Canadian Institute For Health Information. <www.cihi.ca>

Civic Vitality

EXPECTATIONS

Canadians who think these issues are important (%):	July 94	July 95	July 96	July 97	June 98	May/June 99*
Health care/ medicare	3	12	13	15	36	38
Unemployment/ jobs	33	34	44	49	30	25
Education	2	3	6	8	17	20
Taxes/ tax reform/ GST	3	5	4	6	7	14
The economy (general)	21	22	26	17	20	13
Deficit/ debt/ spending	18	28	23	17	15	12
Poverty/ hunger/ homelessness	1	8	6	7	7	10
National unity/ Quebec/ constitution	17	22	39	40	28	9
Environment	3	4	5	7	5	6
Crime/ justice issues	5	12	6	8	4	3

** The question asked in this survey was worded in a different manner.*

Source: Angus Reid. *The Public Agenda,* July 11, 1998, and May-June survey, June 17, 1999.

PARTICIPATION	TREND	NOTES
Voting rates	In federal elections, voter turnout has been decreasing since 1989. In provincial elections, only Saskatchewan and Yukon have shown increases in voter turnout.	
Number of charitable donors	increased	The median charitable donation remained stable at $170. Refers to 1998 data.
Donations raised through the United Way ($)	increased	Refers to 1998 data

Sources: Elections Canada website; Statistics Canada. "Charitable Donors, 1998" in *The Daily,* Nov. 25, 1999; United Way of Canada, *1998 Campaign Results.*

Health Status

PHYSICAL HEALTH, SOCIO-EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL RISKS	TREND					NOTES
Age group:	0-4 yrs	5-9 yrs	10-14 yrs	15-19 yrs	20-24 yrs	
Infant mortality rate (<1)	decreased					
Mortality rate	no change	no change	no change	no change	no change	
Injury death rate (per 100,000)		decreased	decreased	decreased	decreased	Refers to 1996 data.
Pregnancy rate				NA	NA	No new data available.
Fertility rate				decreased	decreased	
Number of live births				decreased	decreased	
Number of abortions				NA	NA	No new data available.
Incidence of sexually transmitted diseases:						
Chlamydia						
Female				decreased	decreased	
Male				decreased	decreased	
Gonococcal infections						
Female				decreased	decreased	
Male				decreased	decreased	
Syphilis						
Female				decreased	decreased	
Male				decreased	decreased	

Note: No new data on immunizations are available.

Sources: Statistics Canada. *Annual Demographic Statistics, 1998;* Health Canada, Laboratory Centre for Disease Control. <cythera.ic.gc.ca/spansweb/ndis/index_e.html>; CHIRPP using Statistics Canada's Mortality Data Tables.

Social Engagement

COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS	TREND	NOTES *(Refers to 1998 data)*
For youth aged 12 to 17:		
Crime rate	decreased	Refers to the youth charge rate.
Violent crime rate (per 100,000)	decreased	
– Increase/ decrease in youth violent crime rate since 1994	decreased by 1.5%	
Youth homicide rate (per 100,000)	increased	

Source: Sylvain Tremblay. "Crime Statistics in Canada, 1998," in *Juristat,* Vol. 19, No. 9, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics.

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS	TREND		NOTES *(Refers to 1998 data)*
Age groups:	6-11 years	12-17 years	
Missing children/ runaways	N/A	N/A	Data not released by age groups.

Source: RCMP. *Missing Children's Registry, 1998.*

Learning

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS	TREND		NOTES *(Refers to 1998 data)*
Age groups:	15-19 yrs	20-24 yrs	
Enrolment in school (%)	no change	increased	
High school completion	increased	increased	
Educational attainment (%)			
Less than 8 years		no change	
9-10 years		decreased	
11-13 years, non-graduate		no change	
11-13 years, graduate		increased	
Some post-secondary		decreased	
Post-secondary certificate or diploma		increased	
University degree		increased	

Source: Statistics Canada. *Survey of Consumer Finances*, 1998.

Labour Force Profile

INCOME	TREND		NOTES
Age groups:	15-19 yrs	20-24 yrs	
Average earnings	decreased	increased	
Men	decreased	increased	
Women	decreased	decreased	
Average income	decreased	increased	
Men	decreased	increased	
Women	decreased	decreased	

Source: Statistics Canada. *Survey of Consumer Finances*, 1998.

LABOUR FORCE ACTIVITY	TREND		NOTES
Age groups:	15-19 yrs	20-24 yrs	
Labour force participation rate	decreased	increased	Refers to 1998 data
Labour force participation rate of women	decreased	increased	Refers to 1998 data
Labour force participation rate of men	decreased	decreased	Refers to 1998 data
Teens/ young adults employed (%)			
Students	decreased	increased	
Non-students	decreased	increased	
Employed part-time (%)	increased	increased	
Unemployment rate (%)	increased	decreased	
Youth not in school, not in workforce (%)	increased	decreased	

Sources: Statistics Canada. *Labour Force Annual Averages*, 1998 and *Survey of Consumer Finances*, 1998.

Primary Data Sources

NATIONAL LONGITUDINAL SURVEY OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH (NLSCY)

The National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY), developed by Statistics Canada and Human Resources Development Canada, collects information on over 20,000 children (newborns to 13 years of age). Starting in 1994, the NLSCY will survey these children every two years until they reach adulthood. In the first cycle of the survey, both the child's primary caregiver and teacher were asked to provide information, as were children aged 10 and 11. In the second cycle of the survey in 1996, children aged 12 and 13 were also included. The NLSCY includes a broad range of family, household, and community characteristics affecting child development.

NATIONAL POPULATION HEALTH SURVEY (NPHS)

The National Population Health Survey (NPHS), conducted by Statistics Canada, collects information related to the health of the Canadian population. A cross-section of information is obtained by surveying all members of the survey households (58,000 individuals). To collect longitudinal information, one respondent per household, aged 12 years and older, is surveyed (18,000 individuals). Data will be collected every two years, starting in 1994.

SURVEY OF CONSUMER FINANCES (SCF)

The Survey of Consumer Finances (SCF) is an annual Statistics Canada survey that provides a cross-section of information on the sources and distribution of income for families and individuals. Data are obtained from approximately 38,000 households in Canada, excluding persons living in the Yukon, Northwest Territories, on Indian reserves and Crown lands, and residents of institutions.

1996 CENSUS

Statistics Canada's 1996 Census provides national coverage of the entire Canadian population, including variables on demographic, social, cultural, labour force, and income data as well as details on dwellings, households and families. Generally, data are presented for Canada, the provinces, terrritories and for Census Metropolitan Areas. Some tables include comparisons with data from earlier Censuses.

SURVEY OF LABOUR AND INCOME DYNAMICS (SLID)

Beginning in 1993, the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID) is an ongoing longitudinal survey that interviews each sample member over a six-year period. The longitudinal nature of this survey, as well as the extensive data content, allow analysis of issues related to the labour market and income, including low income and changes in income over time.

NATIONAL GRADUATES SURVEY

This Statistics Canada survey, sponsored by Human Resources Development Canada, provides information on the integration of recent graduates into the labour market. Data are collected on such factors as jobs obtained since graduation (number, type and duration of jobs), the length of the job search, the relationship between the students' education or training and the jobs obtained, and any additional studies or training since graduation. Surveys were conducted in 1978, 1984, 1988, 1992, and 1997 for students who had graduated two years earlier. Data used in this report are from the 1992 and 1997 surveys.

Primary and Selected Secondary Sources by Section

The primary data for *The Progress of Canada's Children 1999/2000* have been calculated by researchers at the Canadian Council on Social Development using information from Statistics Canada surveys. Selected secondary sources are listed below according to the section of *Progress* in which they were used. Sources for the charts are provided with each chart. For more information about the data used in *The Progress of Canada's Children 1999/2000: Into the Millennium*, please contact the CCSD.

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Photo credits:

Thanks to the following for their photographic contributions: Rebecca Albert-Semanyk, Diane Aubin, Charles Birchall, Susan Carter, Nathalie Coutou, Jim Davidson, Richard Dent, EPIC Cape Breton, Gail & Doug Fawcett, Angela Gibson-Kierstead, Rachel Green, Henry Gzik, Jean Lock Kunz, Franck de la Mata, the Porter & Quast/Buckland families, Katherine Scott, Susan Scruton, Jacquie Seifert, Arlette Sinquin, Delaney Turner, Debbie Vanderburgh.

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The CCSD gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the **Laidlaw Foundation**, **Health Canada** and the **National Crime Prevention Centre** in producing *The Progress of Canada's Children 1999/2000*.

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